

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Mitsugi Nishihara

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Mitsugi Nishihara, son of Hichiro and Fusa Nishihara who immigrated to Kaua'i from Hiroshima, Japan, was born September 13, 1906 in Halehaka, Kaua'i. Three years later, his mother died, and Mitsugi went to Kōloa to live with an uncle. Mitsugi's father, a laborer for Lihu'e Plantation, eventually moved to Wailua. In 1912, Mitsugi joined his father.

In 1917, the family moved to Kōloa and lived in Japanese Camp. Mitsugi attended Kōloa School until the eighth grade. At Kōloa Plantation, he worked a variety of jobs: kalai, hanawai, mule man, and cane cutter. In 1923, he left the cane fields to work as a bottle washer, bottler, and delivery man for Asahi Ice and Soda Works.

Mitsugi began his twenty-nine-year career with Kōloa Plantation Store in 1931, working as an order-taker and eventually becoming head of the Japanese department. He also was in charge of ordering merchandise for the entire store.

In 1959, following the closing of Kōloa Plantation Store, Mitsugi worked as an appliance salesman at Lihu'e Store. After that store closed in 1968, he worked for Ramsey Appliance until his retirement in 1971.

Mitsugi lives in Kōloa on land he purchased from the Waterhouse Estate. He and his wife raised six children, all of whom graduated from colleges on the Mainland.

Tape No. 15-7-1-87

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mitsugi Nishihara (MN)

April 1, 1987

Kōloa, Kaua'i

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Mitsugi Nishihara on April 1, 1987 at his home in Kōloa. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Nishihara, first of all, I want to start by asking you when and where you were born.

MN: I was born in Halehaka, Kaua'i on September 13, 1906.

WN: What were your parents doing in Halehaka?

MN: Well, my mother [Fusa Nishihara] was a house[wife]---she used to stay in the home. She doesn't work. But my father [Hichiro Nishihara] used to work on the plantation.

WN: Which plantation?

MN: Grove Farm. That was Grove Farm Plantation. That's right.

WN: What kind of work did your father do?

MN: Oh, just plantation laborer. All kind, you know, hanawai, kālai, and all those work, eh?

WN: Where exactly is Halehaka?

MN: Halehaka is where Puhi is today, way in the back of that place, more in the countryside. Puhi is right on the main street.

WN: I see. Where were your parents from originally?

MN: Hiroshima, Japan.

WN: Did your mother come as a picture bride?

MN: That, I don't remember. I don't know if she was a picture bride or not. I really don't know.

WN: So, when you were about three years old, you moved to Kōloa.

MN: Yeah, well, my mother died when I was three years old. So then, I was brought over to my uncle's place in Kōloa. And I stayed there with my uncle. Because my father had to go to work, he couldn't go to work taking care of us. I had my sister and my brother. I was three years old, my brother was four, and my sister was one. Then, my brother was sent to Japan to be taken care of in Japan by the relatives. And my sister was adopted by a Ihara family who's no relation to us. They had a store in Kapaia. I was sent to Kōloa where my uncle was and I stayed there for three years.

WN: What part of Kōloa?

MN: Kōloa [Japanese] Camp up there, plantation camp. And then, I moved to Wailua. My father came to get us. And my sister was adopted by Ihara, but, somehow, she was sickly all the time. So the Ihara family felt that probably she didn't agree with them. So, she was given back to my father. So we both went to Wailua and lived together with my father when I was six and my sister was four.

WN: So, your father moved from Halehaka to Wailua then?

MN: Yeah. When he moved to Wailua, I don't know. But when he came to get us, he was in Wailua, on the plantation, but Līhu'e Plantation this time. And there was a camp right above that Wailua River there.

Then, my father moved to Kōloa because there was. . . . You know, those days, they had a contract they can do with the plantation, cultivating so many acres on a contract basis. And if the sugar price is good, and then they have good cane growing, and they had good amount of sugar, then they have bonus and whatnot. And there was a chance given to him over here at Kōloa--not necessarily given, but a friend was here who said that there was an opportunity as such, so how about coming over. So he decided to come. That's how we decided to all come together.

WN: Was that common? Lot of people had plots of land to cultivate?

MN: Yes, yes, yes. That was rather common.

WN: And how did that work? They got paid according to the tonnage?

MN: Actually, contract means they would get extra. They would get paid regularly, their regular pay. But naturally, feeling it is their contract obligation, that work that he had to do [was] more than ordinary work. And maybe he has to work a little longer or sometimes he has to go a little earlier. In other words, he works harder because he feels that that's his contract. And so, if the sugar price is good and if the production is good, then they'll get bonus over and above whatever they got paid. But it wasn't successful. (Chuckles) But nevertheless, you get your pay. So you

don't starve.

WN: But at the end, when you take it to the mill, that's when you get a lump sum?

MN: Yeah, lump sum, bonus.

WN: So, when you folks moved to Kōloa, you were about eleven years old?

MN: Yeah, about that. Eleven years old, right.

WN: Where did you folks live when you went to Kōloa?

MN: When we moved to Kōloa, we lived in the camp, too. You know, there was a big camp in . . .

WN: Japanese Camp?

MN: Japanese Camp, mm hmm. Those days, they used to have Japanese Camp, they used to have Portuguese Camp, and Filipino Camp. All kinds.

WN: What did your house look like?

MN: Oh, boy. I wish I had a picture I could show you. It's a shack. But to us, that was a nice home because at least we had shelter. But in comparison to what the lunas--the lunas were mainly Haoles--in comparison to what they were living, oh, no comparison at all. It was a real nice cottage for them. And those homes are still up there, yeah?

WN: Oh, by the manager's . . .

MN: Yeah, the manager's place around there. The homes are still there. Nice homes. But the plantation homes which we were living, all broken down already. Oh, I don't know how old it was. Probably hundred years. But of course, they repair and whatnot. But it was a shack.

WN: What did the plantation supply you folks, besides the house?

MN: Besides the house, they used to supply us firewood at the beginning. And even later, they still continued. But later on, they used to give us kerosene, too, because that oil stove started to come out. Before that, was just wood, you know. We used to burn wood only and cook rice and whatnot. Then, well, water was free. No electricity in those days, all . . .

WN: Was there running water?

MN: Running water, mm hmm [yes]. Running water with all that pipeline and whatnot. But when I was a kid, when I first came here, there were no running water to the house. There was a big tank in about the center of the camp and we all had to go with a bucket and get

the water from the tank. That was beginning, I remember that.

WN: What did the tank look like?

MN: Oh, the ordinary tanks. I would say maybe good 500 gallons or something. That kind of big tank, you know. Made of . . .

WN: Wooden tank?

MN: Wooden tank, uh huh. And all the people in the camp used to go there for their water supply. (Chuckles)

WN: What, had little spigots?

MN: Yeah. That's right. Actually, at that particular time, I don't know how we took a bath, no? I don't remember. (Laughs)

WN: Did you have a furo?

MN: Later, I remember. But if the furo people had to go and get the water from the tank, no, impossible. Because the furo is big. Of course, they could have a small box--well, rather big box--made so they can put their water in there. But at that time, when the big tank where we used to get the water from was there, I doubt there was furo. I don't remember. But later on, they had furo. And we used to all go to the furo. Not necessarily all the camp people, but most of them used to go.

WN: They had only one furo?

MN: There were two furo. One was Iseri and one was Komaki or something like that. Two families used to run a furo, you know. Of course, they charge you for that, not free.

WN: Do you know about how old you were when the camp had the furo?

MN: I think I was about, ten [MN probably was at least eleven]. Then, later, each family started to make their own furo. So the furo-ya, they quit making furo.

WN: You folks had your own furo?

MN: Yeah. Each one had their own furo. And that requires lot of firewood, you know. Ho, that's hard work. That's why, our parents, especially the father, used to practically work for firewood on Sundays. That's all they did. That was hard work. Because the plantation used to give firewood, but not enough. So, they had to go in the fields and get the firewood. They'll [allow] you all the firewood you want. But the work is to go and get it.

WN: So, plantation gave you folks a supply of cut firewood, but then if you needed more, you had to go and cut your own?

MN: That's right, that's right.

WN: What kind of wood, mostly?

MN: Mostly guavas, like that. Guavas and eucalyptus. And then, sometimes, hau bush. (Chuckles) Hau bush was just rubbish.

WN: Burns fast?

MN: Oh, burns fast and it's just like paper. But eucalyptus and guava are fine firewood. They last long. But the old people, six days a week they used to go to work. Ten hours a day. That's what they worked before, you know. Ten hours a day, six days a week, one dollar one day. And so, they had only Sunday off. And on that Sunday, they had to work on the firewood. Because this firewood they [plantation] give you, they giving this length, about, oh, six, eight feet long. And then, they dump it by your house, there. Then you have to saw that and you have to chop that, and then you have to store that in a shack. You have to build a shack there. Because when it rains, you get [it] all wet, then it won't burn. So you have to store it. That's hard work, I tell you. Our fathers really worked hard. Yeah, just imagine, boy. Six days a week, ten hours a day.

WN: What were some of your jobs, chores around the house that you had to do?

MN: Well, actually, we had nothing to do in the camp, you see. We had no work to do. We only played, that's all. (Laughs) Yeah, we used to get together and play.

WN: You didn't have a mother that time, right?

MN: No.

WN: So, who did the cooking?

MN: Well, my father. He had to cook. That's right. It was really hard for my father. In comparison to today, oh, boy, it's entirely different.

WN: What about toilet?

MN: Oh, that toilet was that dirty thing. Because we don't have any water toilet. We never even dreamed about a water toilet. In our [Japanese] Camp over here, Kōloa, we had an outside toilet with a small little shack. The wood to sit on, with a hole. And then, underneath, there was a box that they used to come and bring. Empty box to put it there. Then, that's our toilet. Then when that box is filled, they come and get it and throw it in the plantation field.

WN: How often did they come?

MN: Oh, good if they came once a week, yeah? Oh, that get real filled. Especially big family. (Chuckles) Dirty, it's really dirty.

WN: They disinfect it at all?

MN: Yeah. They used to come and throw lime inside there. But somehow, we never heard of anybody, because of the dirty toilet, that got sick or anything like that. (Chuckles) Real unsanitary, but it doesn't mean that unsanitary condition was bad for the health. (Chuckles) Because everybody seemed to be healthy. Although, you know, in those days, the older people, their life span was about fifty, yeah? Most of them would just go about that or little older. Whereas, today, look, seventy-five, eighty. About seventy-five, isn't it?

WN: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

MN: Well, maybe you can say that because of the present food condition maybe? And then, the advance of medical, yeah? And all those, I think, has a lot to do.

WN: Who were your doctors in those days?

MN: We had a plantation doctor. Only one doctor. Of course, emergency, we go to the hospital. I never know that there was a telephone in those days. I doubt if we had any telephone. So somebody had to go and report to the doctor. Then he would come to the house and attend to you.

WN: Dr. [A. H.] Waterhouse?

MN: Yeah. He was our doctor. He was our longtime doctor. Nice man. Nice, devoted Christian man.

WN: So, you went to Kōloa School?

MN: Yeah. Kōloa School. Up to the eighth grade. Then I stopped and I started to go to work after that.

WN: Why did you stop at eighth grade?

MN: Well, actually, I wanted to go to high school because all the rest [i.e., classmates] went. But my father wouldn't let me go. He wants me to go to work. He says that he needs the money to help him and whatnot. And those days, somehow, we listened to our parents. What they say is a go. No such thing as, "No, I don't want." No. You just listened to them and you obey.

WN: You had a brother and a sister. Did they go to high school?

MN: No, my brother was in Japan.

WN: Oh, yeah.

MN: But my sister didn't either. No, she didn't go. Well, because of my father, a widower, who took care of us, I don't blame him, you know, that he wanted me to work. Because he wanted the money, eh? He had to continue supporting my sister and my brother, too, in Japan. My brother was in Japan for twelve years. And after the twelve years, he came back. And then, he was sixteen years old. Well, they would accept him, though, but my father told him to go to school. So, I'm sure he went to Kōloa School and he started there, but, a big boy with the little children in the first grade, embarrassing, eh? So he quit. He didn't continue. Then he started to go to work, too.

WN: What were some of the things you folks used to do as kids growing up on the plantation?

MN: Well, actually, we used to play with the neighbor's kids. And those days, we used to play marbles, tops, and all those things. Not the present-day kind of sports, no. Although, we did play baseball, but you had to make your own ball with the cloth like that. Then, we used to get the hau bush for the bat. Those days, we can't have bats and balls and gloves, no more. But we did play ball.

WN: Where did you play?

MN: In the camp, was a big opening there. We play. We enjoyed, though, because that's all we knew.

WN: So you folks made a lot of your toys?

MN: Yeah, lot of our toys. The tops, we're able to buy. Tops and marbles. We had a lot of fun with that. Then, after school, get together at a certain place and then we all get together and play.

WN: What else did you folks make besides ball?

MN: Besides balls, no, hardly anything.

WN: What about kites?

MN: Yeah, we did play kites. We used to make our own kites, we play.

WN: Did you use bamboo?

MN: Yeah, bamboo. And those days, fruits. You know, like today, we have oranges, peaches, whatnot, all coming from the Mainland, eh? We had our, we used to call that "Hawaiian orange," local orange, grown here. And then, other than that, no other fruits except local fruits such as mountain apple--ohia, they call it. Mountain apple, rose apple, momi apple, and cream apple. Those were nice fruits, though. But those, again, were grown mostly in this property here, Dr. Waterhouse's property.

WN: Oh, right here?

MN: Yeah. And that was his property, but we used to come and steal sometime.

(Laughter)

MN: Mangoes. Common mango, you know.

WN: So, those weren't growing in the camps, then?

MN: Not much. Mangoes and so forth, we had. And there was one tree, Wī apple, they call that.

WN: Wī apple?

MN: Yeah. Kind of hard, green. There was one tree right in the camp there, and, boy, that was delicious to us. Because no more other places. Sometimes, we used to get from that person that owned it. And another one was tamarind. You know what tamarind is?

WN: Tamarind? Yeah, yeah.

MN: Yeah, sour thing. We had that right back here. That, Waterhouse property, too. And that tamarind, oh, boy, we used to go and pick all the time. That sour thing, we used to eat.

WN: Oh, that just like crack seed, huh?

MN: Yeah, real sour. But was good for us, those days. And another thing was, today you don't see too much of it, but cactus.

WN: Pānini?

MN: Pānini. That, they were growing all over the vacant field, you know. And those paninis used to have fruits. You don't remember, eh?

WN: Inside?

MN: No. You see, the leaf comes up like that with all the thorns. You know, eh?

WN: Yeah.

MN: Then, on top of that, the flower used to bloom and then come the fruit. And that fruit, again, has thorns all around, small thorns. If you just grab that and bite and eat, the thorns get all stuck in your mouth. So you have to know exactly how to cut that like that, and then peel that, and eat the inside.

WN: What did it taste like?

MN: It tasted little sweet, not too good but. Well, better than nothing, anyway.

(Laughter)

MN: But we did enjoy, though, because we didn't know of anything else. But today, look. You get all the fruits come in, flown over. Fresh as can be.

WN: What about food like, you know, for dinner like that? What kind foods did you folks eat?

MN: Well, like in my case, you see, no mother. And so, my father had to cook. Oh, boy. I remember, our food was hardly anything. We used to buy meat from the plantation. They had a butcher shop. Those days, in the [plantation] store, they never sold meat. So, exactly about the cuts of the meat, we never knew. We used to buy the meat at the plantation butcher shop. We go over there and just ask for meat. And those days, was cheap. Fifteen cents, twenty-five cents a pound. (Chuckles) But that was all the scrap meat. What they did, they'd kill the cow in the morning. Then in the afternoon, they going to sell that. And those days, in other words, we felt that we eating fresh meat.

Then later on, when that thing was transferred to the store and the store started to sell that, they used to chill it in the refrigerator, and then don't sell it until after it's well chilled. So that it's more tender. And those days, when we were going to the store to buy, we felt that was old meat, so we didn't want it. We want fresh meat that was killed today like how we used to buy from the plantation butcher shop. But then, again, at the plantation [store], in the morning they kill the cow. And then, the butcher comes over there and slices and cuts all the meat. He cuts all the good meat, which we didn't know there was, steaks and whatnot. All those goes to the supervisors, the lunas. And actually what we got was the scrap--the fat, and the bone, and all that scraps. But that's all we had. Nothing else we can get. So, usually, used to make stew and so forth. Mostly. Stews, soups.

WN: Did you folks have a garden?

MN: Yeah. Every place, every family had a garden. And they used to raise the vegetables. And that helped quite a bit. Daikon and cabbage, and all kind. Green onions, yeah? That really helped. And so their foods were mostly vegetables. We didn't have good food at all those days.

WN: What about chickens?

MN: Chickens, we used to raise our own. And we had a chicken coop. The chicken, it's not kept all like today. All in one coop, like that. We have a big coop. In the morning, we let the chickens go out. And they go all around and play. In the morning, we feed 'em and in the evening we feed 'em again. And they just roam around, lay their eggs, and whatnot. Those days, actually, I think we used to eat chicken twice a year.

WN: Twice a year?

MN: Twice. That's all we used to eat. Emperor's birthday, you know, Japanese . . .

WN: Tenchō-setsu?

MN: Yeah. (Chuckles) And then, shōgatsu. Yeah, New Year. Those are the two days that we had chicken. They want to kill the oldest chicken because they'll die otherwise, and catch that, and kill. So we used to eat the oldest chicken, tough as can be, but that's all we knew. (Chuckles) We felt that's a good chicken. And eating it twice a year only, naturally, we felt that, "Oh, boy, chicken is real good stuff."

(Laughter)

MN: But tough as can be. But we thought chicken was all like that. (Chuckles)

WN: So, older chicken is tough and what? Dry, too?

MN: Tough and dry.

WN: The eggs, what, you would go around and gather?

MN: Yeah.

WN: Did you know where they laid the eggs?

MN: No, you don't know. But, we put boxes in the coop. And then, some hens will go over there and lay their eggs. But some, because they go roaming around the yard, they lay in the grass and so forth. You don't know that they're laying there. But you know later on because they hatch and come out with the chicks. That's right.

WN: So, like Tenchō-setsu, you're telling me, what did you folks do on Tenchō-setsu?

MN: Tenchō-setsu was a holiday for the old Japanese people, you know. But Tenchō-setsu not holiday for the school. So, if there's school, we have to go to school. But usually, what the Japanese used to do was, they have this. . . . Well, I think everyone had this scroll or what you call it. That long picture. You call that "scroll," eh?

WN: Yeah.

MN: Long like this, picture. With the tennō heika picture on there. And they put on the wall like that. Then right below that, they have a box or table. And then, right on the table, they put sake and some gochisō on top there. That's how they used to respect the emperor.

WN: Did the workers have to work that day?

MN: Usually, they lay off.

WN: They lay off?

MN: It's not a holiday, but they lay off. The plantation expects that. New Year, too. And, well, even here, they really strongly respected the emperor, eh? That, and their religion were mostly Buddhism. So they have the hotoke-sama, like that. The hotoke-sama inside there [in the family altar].

WN: What church were you a member of?

MN: My father was Buddhist, so naturally, we inherited his religion. So, I went to the Buddhist church. In fact, I went to the Buddhist school, Japanese[-language] school.

WN: The Hongwanji?

MN: Yeah, Hongwanji. In fact, when I came over here and started to go to school, I started there right away already. Then, even [after] I got married, I was a Buddhist for a long time. Then, now, I'm converted to a Christian.

WN: So, when did you go Japanese school? After school?

MN: After school. One hour, Japanese school. After English school [i.e., public school instruction]. Those days, we used to have the Hongwanji school and the regular Japanese school. Right opposite.

WN: Oh, was separate?

MN: Yeah, separate, you know. Hongwanji here, Japanese school was there.

WN: Who sponsored the other Japanese[-language] school?

MN: The community sponsored that. The majority of them went there. The Hongwanji had only few. Not so many. Because most of the camp's people went to the [community] Japanese school. Then, later on, way later, after I got through with the Japanese school, I was working already, they combined together, the Hongwanji and the Japanese school. And so, the Hongwanji teachers used to go over there and teach at the Kōloa Japanese[-language] School.

WN: What were some of the stores that were in the area?

MN: Stores, yes, we had one or two in the camp.

WN: That was Sueoka [Store]?

MN: Sueoka was one. Then, of course, there was Ebata [Store]. You know

that Ebata?

WN: Burt [Ebata].

MN: The father [Seiroku Ebata]. And Tao [Store]. And Kōloa Plantation Store. And then, there was another, Kaua'i Trading [Company]. So, there were quite a bit of stores around. But stores had hard time, those days. The income [of the workers was] small and once a month, they get paid. You see, by the time they get paid, they had to pay this, they had to pay that. So, they can't pay the store. It's always the store that they leave back, eh? Stores had hard time, those days. That's why, those that started stores, like Ebata and Tao--Tao continued for a while, though. [Mankichi] Sueoka did all right. But Ebata had a hard time. He was a nice man, though, the father. That's the problem. You can sell. They want to buy, so you can sell. But you cannot collect because they [customers] have a limited amount [of money] only.

And those days, no control in children. By golly, most of the family had eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve children. And only one dollar a day. That's why, the children suffered just as much as the parents suffered. Yeah, I think the second generation really suffered.

WN: When you were about fifteen, you started working at Kōloa Plantation?

MN: Yeah, I did start working there.

WN: What was your first job there? Well, first of all, how did you get the job?

MN: Well, we go and apply at the plantation. And then, naturally, they give you the job right away. Because they can employ as much as they want, no limit to it, those days. So, you get the job right away. But usually, you start from hoeing, kalai. Then, thereon, well, it's up to you. So, I tried all kind. I tried hoeing, I tried irrigating--hanawai. Then, I tried that mule man, too. (Chuckles)

WN: What did the mule man . . .

MN: Plowing the cane field. In those days, cutting of the cane was done all by the men. Men used to cut the cane. Then, men used to come and "hāpai kō," they call it. Those days, they used to have the car--it's a train car just like. And then, that used to come in the field. On the main track, there's only one [train] running from the mill to a certain place. But all the fields, they don't have any tracks. So, they used to have what they call the "track men." And the track men used to go and carry that [tracks], and then lay it down. It's a temporary thing, see. Just to pass that cars in so that they can hāpai kō. So the cars go inside [into the field]. Then the men, they put a kind of a ladder right up to the car, and

then carry that cane on their back, and throw 'em in there. Fill up that cane car. Hard work. That was hard.

WN: So they laid the track on the ground?

MN: Yeah.

WN: And then, that was before or after they cut the cane?

MN: Actually, after they cut the cane. All cut down, then they clean up certain place where they can lay the track. And then, the track is just hooked on like that. You know, the ends are just. . . . It's not a tie, you know, the track tie, with the spike, no. The main track [is] where the train [locomotive] passes. But [in the fields], the train not going to pass. It's a temporary track where the cane cars go in. And then, how they haul the cane out [to the main track] is by mule. With the mules, they bring the cars to the [main] track.

WN: So, the mules pull the cars . . .

MN: Pull the car [along] where the track man laid the track. Then, the hāpai kō man fills [the car] up. And after it's filled, then the mule man, again, pulls it out to the main track. And then, that locomotive comes and pick it up.

WN: So, they got to move the mules to the back part to pull it back?

MN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's it. They have a big hook, you know. Hook it onto the cane car, and then drag it out.

WN: Generally, how far in from the main track did the tracks usually go?

MN: Oh, quite far. Quite far.

WN: Like over a hundred yards?

MN: Oh, yes, yes. Big cane field, eh? If the main track is running here [near the area being harvested], the locomotive come and go to the main track there. But then, if the cane field starts here [far from the area being harvested], then you not going load on there [i.e., the main track]. You have to line it up like that, that [portable] track. And then, the hāpai kō man loads it up.

Then, of course, later on, like today, it's all mechanical. Big tractor goes in the field. And they have this grabber like this, you know. Big grabber. Have you seen that?

WN: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

MN: Then they load it onto the truck now. So you don't need any tracks anymore in the field. The trucks go in the field. Then they just load it up. And then, the truck, after it's filled, it goes to the

mill. All mechanical, now. Even cutting the cane, there's no such thing as cut cane no more.

WN: Oh, yeah? They don't cut anymore?

MN: No. The cane grows like this. Okay, then they burn it, so that all the dry leaves are burnt and it's clear. Then, before, [men] used to cut. But now, this grabber here goes there and just grab 'em like that. Every one like this. Grab, pile, grab, pile, grab, pile. And they make a big pile. Then they grab it and throw in that truck. All mechanical today. (Chuckles)

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: So, after the cane was cut, somebody had to put 'em in bundles, huh?

MN: Before [prior to mechanization]?

WN: Yeah, before.

MN: Yeah. Usually, the women used to do that, the wives. The husband is the hāpai kō man, then he gets his wife to help him, to pile that up like that. So when he goes there, just grab and [load]. Otherwise, if nobody to do that, then he has to do it. That's extra work. Yeah, all the wives used to do that.

WN: Usually, how heavy was one load of cane?

MN: All depend on the person, yeah? If it's a big guy, you just get a big load. A small guy, well, it's smaller load. But, now, when he starts filling this car up, then it's his. Not everybody going fill that car. He's going to pile that up. Then, they going to weigh that and they give them what that car weigh.

WN: Oh, oh, I see. Piecework wages.

MN: All, yeah. It's all contract.

WN: So, the faster or the more you can carry one load, the more you make?

MN: Yeah, yeah. That's right. But hard work. You know, those people, over here used to be all hard like rock already.

WN: The shoulder?

MN: Yeah, the side that they carry, eh? It's tough job, that. (Chuckles)

WN: You know that papa where they step [the wooden plank on which workers walk to load cane onto cane cars], how wide was that?

MN: Oh, about a foot.

WN: Foot wide? Oh. (Chuckles)

MN: (Chuckles) But you know, the old people were young, those days. They were really tough. (Chuckles) Even the cane cutting, why, it's hard work. Just go like this with the cane knife [MN makes cutting motion], yeah, but you try all day, boy, your hand get real stiff.

WN: Did you do that, too?

MN: I did. I did. (Chuckles) It's not an easy job.

WN: So, those days, they didn't burn [the cane] then? Was all . . .

MN: They did. They did burn.

WN: But you folks still had to cut the . . .

MN: Yeah. If you don't burn it, all that rubbish [i.e., the sugarcane leaves] there, that's extra work. Otherwise, you have to just kind of clean that and then cut, eh?

WN: Holehole?

MN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's why, even today, they do burn that. They don't holehole. What they do is, with that big tractor, they grab like that, eh? So, all the rubbish there will go together with that in the truck. Then that goes to the mill, and the mill get the hard time [separating the cane from the rubbish]. That's why, they burn. Now, there's lot of complaints about that burning the cane today, you know. Lot of people complaining about it. But if they stop them from doing that, it's hard. It's hard for them. That's all extra work for them. Of course, it may affect some people who have emphysema like that, eh? But the cane burning has been done over [100] years already, maybe.

WN: So you did kālai, hanawai, mule man . . .

MN: Mule man.

WN: . . . cut cane.

MN: Cut cane.

WN: Any other jobs?

MN: No, that's about all. Because it was just a short while, eh? I didn't stay too long.

WN: What job did you hate the most?

MN: Ah, kālai. Yeah, I didn't like kālai. I was real slow in kālai.
(Chuckles) I used to do too much of a neat job. That's why, slow.
Some people just cover the dirt on.

(Laughter)

MN: Then the luna come and raise hell with them. But fast, if you do that.

WN: When you first started, how much were you making?

MN: Seventy-five cents a day. (Chuckles) I was kid, yet . . .

WN: So usually, dollar [a day], but you were a kid.

MN: Yeah, yeah. When I was a mule man, I think they gave me one dollar already.

WN: When you started, you got straight day wages, then?

MN: Yeah. Ten hours a day, you know, we worked. And that's all you get. (Chuckles)

WN: Cut cane, you were day wages, too?

MN: Yeah, yeah. (Chuckles)

WN: So, were you about the youngest one out there?

MN: Well, at that time, maybe I was about the youngest. Because the rest went to high school. But probably, there were some that didn't go to school at all. Some children didn't go to school, you know. (Chuckles) Those days, anyway, they weren't so strict about it.

WN: They treated you okay because you were young kid?

MN: Not necessarily. If I'm slow, they say "Hurry up! Hurry up! Yeah, go ahead! Go ahead!" You know? And if I do kind of a dirty job like that, then he scold you again, too.

WN: You're talking about the luna?

MN: The luna, yeah.

WN: So was your luna Japanese?

MN: No, Portuguese. Hardly any Japanese luna those days. Either Portuguese, Hawaiian and Haoles. Haoles were not lunas. They were field boss--further up, eh? But the lunas were mostly Portuguese, like that, Hawaiians. Hardly any Japanese. Yeah, actually, the Japanese that came from Japan thinking that there was an opportunity

here, they were mistaken. Hard work. Actually, they were [like] slaves at the beginning. They came under [labor] contract, eh? I used to hear that they used to. . . . For instance, if you lay off today, then they'll come to [your] house. And if they think that you just pretending you're sick, then they chase you out and let you go to work, I heard. You know, the old people used to say that. They were mean, mean, mean.

WN: I was wondering, your father was still a contract man?

MN: No. He came much later. So, they were free to go any plantation they want to. [MN thought WN is referring to the pre-1900 labor contracts which bound a worker to a single plantation.]

WN: Right. But then, when your father was doing contract [i.e., cane cultivation], how come you didn't join his gang or anything like that?

MN: I was too young yet. I was still going to school, eh? You mean, later on?

WN: Yeah.

MN: No, I had no intention. But again, when I was working on the plantation, that's all was in my mind, only plantation work. I didn't think that I would go outside and work. But it simply happened that way, you know. That [Yozaemon] Yamamoto came to see me to work for him [at Asahi Ice and Soda Works].

WN: So you felt that you were going to work plantation all your life?

MN: All the time, yeah. That's what I felt, mm hmm. But when I was working the soda works, I don't know after how many years, there was an opening at the Kōloa Plantation office. The guy over there who works there told me I should come and apply for it. And so, I asked my father. My father says, "How much they going to pay you?" Well, I told him they going to pay me thirty dollars which means better than one dollar a day. They going pay me thirty dollars a month. But at that time when I was working soda works, I was getting sixty dollars. Double. But I wanted to go to the office because the soda works, you know, the job is more limited. But office, you going learn all kinds of things. Then, you can advance. And so, I wanted to work, but no chance. My father just refused.

WN: Why?

MN: Sixty dollars. Compared to thirty dollars. Because all the money, those days, used to go to my father. We never took anything from there. The whole package used to go to him, the pay envelope. And from there, then he'll give you a pinch. (Chuckles) Yeah, that's why, I lost that opportunity.

WN: So, tell me how you got the job at Asahi [Ice and] Soda Works [in

1923]?

MN: The man [Yozaemon Yamamoto] came to see me. I don't know how and why he came to see me, though. But he came to see me and my father and asked my father. And naturally, my father would send me because at the plantation I was making one dollar [a day], and he said he [Yamamoto] going give me [a starting salary of] thirty dollars [a month]--the soda works. So, naturally, he [father] said, "Oh, yeah, go, go, go." He doesn't care what kind of job I get. (Chuckles) That's how I started to work. But how and why Yamamoto came to see me, I don't know.

WN: You were still pretty young then, yeah?

MN: Oh, yeah. I was only about seventeen.

WN: And this Mr. Yamamoto was the owner?

MN: He was the owner and manager.

WN: Him and Mr. [John] Cockett?

MN: Cockett, yeah, owner. Cockett was the bookkeeper. He used to take charge of the office. The books, you know.

WN: Where exactly was the soda works?

MN: Right up above here, there's a [county] graveyard, you know. Right alongside that, opposite side of the [Maluhia] Road.

WN: Oh, I see. So, near the Cockett residence?

MN: Yes, that's where it was. It was on Cockett's property [located near the corner of Maluhia and Waila'au Roads].

WN: What were your jobs?

MN: Oh, I used to wash the bottles first. Those days, those bottles were washed by hand, you know. Of course, it [i.e., the machinery] was run by electricity, but there's a pulley that goes around and around, and then there's a brush sticking out. Bottle brush. Sticking out like that. Then what I do is, put the bottle in there. Then outside [of the bottle], brush [it] with another brush. And then, put it in a box. All day long you do that. (Chuckles) The bottles are put in a box, you know, quite a big box. The bottles [are] in the water. And just grab and go wash like that. I did that for quite some time.

WN: Was the water hot?

MN: No, cold water.

(Laughter)

MN: So, actually, it's not sanitary, yeah? If hot water, all right. But, of course, I advanced from that. Then I started to pack the soda. You know, those days, all hand work, too. Not machine that packs, and that gas put in and all that. All by hand. Use your foot, you know.

WN: Packing, you mean putting the soda in the bottle?

MN: In the bottle, yeah. You put the bottle here, then the syrup comes down. Well, you have to open. Then so much syrup comes down. Then, this side hand, you open, and then the gas and the water goes in there. And the gas and water goes in there, then you have to step to put the cap on. All, the hand has to work together.

WN: How did it work? Wasn't mechanical?

MN: No, no, no, no. All manual.

WN: So you step on something with your foot, and then the cap thing comes down . . .

MN: It comes down and then cap it on.

WN: You made one at a time, then?

MN: One at a time, one at a time. Hard work, hard work.

WN: What kind soda?

MN: Those days, used to be orange soda, strawberry soda, root beer, and all kind. Cream soda. But again, people like it, but can't afford it. That's why, they don't buy. Later on, he put me as salesman. So I used to go around and sell to the stores. But to the homes, I used to go only twice a year, Tencho-setsu and shogatsu. That's the only time they buy. We never drank soda before, you know. Only the Tencho-setsu and shogatsu, we buy it.

WN: They order directly through Asahi or through the stores?

MN: I used to go out and take orders, then I deliver to them. The stores, I think, hardly bought by the cases unless they had a party or something like that. But each individual used to go and drink over there at the stores. At that time we used to deliver ice. There's no refrigerator. So, each store used to have that icebox and we used to put ice in there. Then they have the soda in there, eh? So, it's not as cold as refrigerator, you know.

WN: You told me, too, that you used to deliver ice, too?

MN: I did, I did.

WN: How did you do that?

MN: All manual. (Chuckles) You have to carry or put it on your back or just use the tong and carry it. And the ice used to come in hundred-pound blocks. And if they want twenty-five pound, then you have to cut it in four. So, you have a saw, you cut it up.

WN: You had a truck?

MN: Yeah, I had a truck. And I used to deliver. Certain sections, I used to deliver.

WN: Where did you go to deliver?

MN: From Kalāheo down, this way. All around Kalāheo. But not every home. Only scattered homes here and there can afford, eh? Not everybody can afford, those days. In the camps, there were few. But stores, I used to go around, too. Fill up their boxes. In that upper section [in Kōloa] where the supervisors used to stay and the Haoles, they all used to buy. I used to deliver all around there.

WN: So you would park your truck, and get in the back, and get out the block of ice . . .

MN: Yeah. And if fifty pound, then I cut in half, carry that, and go over there, and put it in the box for them.

WN: How big was the box usually?

MN: Well, if it's a fifty pound they buy, then it's a bigger box, you know. Because the ice, you going to put on the top, not down below. On the top you have to put so the cold air gets down. And then, if twenty-five pound, then they have a smaller box. Just about twenty-five pound would go in there.

WN: So, in order to make the ice, then, I guess there was electricity then at that time?

MN: Yeah, at that time, we used to get our ice from Waimea. There was a ice mill over there.

WN: Oh, you folks didn't make?

MN: No. We used to buy the ice. We used to buy the ice and deliver.

WN: So you started out as a bottle washer?

MN: That's right.

WN: Then you moved on to . . .

MN: Then I started to pack the soda. Then I started to sell the soda. And sell the ice.

WN: So, then, I guess soda was a luxury then, yeah, in those days?

MN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It was luxury. Well, actually, they liked it, but they can't afford it. They can't afford it. Only five cents, you know, one bottle.

(Laughter)

MN: If they buy one bottle at the store, it's only five cents. But no five cents to buy that. (Chuckles) Because when I used to work [for the plantation], my father used to give me only one dollar a month (chuckles) from the twenty-six dollars I give him. That's all they give you, you know. You can't blame them. But somehow, they made a go. But I know many of them had a hard time. Those days, they used to have what they call "tanomoshi." No bank, tanomoshi. And the Japanese people used to rely on each other and trust them. So they made the tanomoshi. And then, some, they take the tanomoshi early. They bid on it. If you're the highest bidder, then you get the whole sum. But you have to pay that back every month.

But some, they can't do it, so they run away. Some did run away, you know. They can't pay. Then, if they do such a thing [i.e., tanomoshi], when they bid on the money and they get it, they have to have witnesses. Then the witnesses sign that in case he can't pay, then that witness, "I will pay." That signature, they write down. And so, the witnesses had to pay. (Chuckles) But that's the only way they made a go, through that tanomoshi. If they didn't have that tanomoshi, I don't know how they can make a go.

WN: Especially to buy big things.

MN: Yeah. And especially to pay their debts, stores and whatnot, eh?

WN: When you first started working on the plantation, who was the manager at the time?

MN: Ah, at that time, I think it was a German man named Cropp.

WN: Oh, Ernest Cropp?

MN: I don't know what his first name, but I think was [Ernest] Cropp [1913-22]. Then, after that, exactly who was in between, I don't know. [Caleb E.S. Burns was Kōloa Plantation manager for 9-1/2 months in 1922.] But then I know that John T. Moir [1922-33]. Then Hector Moir [1933-48]. Those were my bosses.

WN: Did you get along with all the managers?

MN: Well, we had no contacts with the managers. We too small. (Chuckles) We not big shots. We can't even talk with them. But when I was working in the store, I was supervisor, and so I was friendly with Hector. Yeah, nice man. Nice man.

WN: So, you were at Asahi [Ice and] Soda [Works] for about . . .

MN: About eight to nine years.

WN: Eight to nine years? So, about 1931, you . . .

MN: Started to work at the [Kōloa Plantation] Store.

WN: . . . started at the store.

MN: Yeah.

WN: Why did you leave?

MN: Because, at that time already the Coca-Cola was getting popular. And when Coca-Cola started to get popular and started to sell, soda was dead. That's how, they had to close.

Then, at the same time, I'm sure refrigerators started to come out, too. Although, not everybody can own it, you know. But that has a little effect, too.

WN: Because why? If everybody has electricity, refrigerator, what? They cannot. . . .

MN: They don't want ice.

WN: Oh, they don't want ice? I see.

MN: And in the camp, we didn't have electricity for a long time. A long time. Exactly what year, I don't remember. It was, I think, anyway, after I got married [in 1931]. The thing was this, at that time, they started to hook up the electricity. They gave the supervisors the first chance. So we got the electricity earlier than the others. And after the electricity was wired all in the camp there, then, of course, we [i.e., Kōloa Plantation Store] started to push refrigerators, washing machine, and whatnot. And people gradually started to buy those things. Not at the beginning, though. So, at that time, I think the times were better because some were able to buy.

And at that time, already, there were many homes with cars, automobiles. I don't know exactly when, but. . . . Even the Model-Ts, only about one or two, you know, in the camp. Yeah, hardly any, those days.

WN: When you worked soda works, what did you drive?

MN: A truck, Model-T.

WN: Model-T?

MN: Mm hmm, truck. When I worked in the store as salesman, I had a truck. But prior to that, not many years earlier, was all that buggy, you know. Yeah, horse and buggy. They used to deliver with

that. I remember those. I didn't do it because I used trucks. But those before me, they used to have buggies with horse.

WN: I notice that the time when the soda company closed down was depression time. Did that have something to do with it?

MN: No, that has no effect. It's simply because Coca-Cola took over. I believe that way.

WN: So, Mr. Cockett and Mr. Yamamoto, what kind of men were they?

MN: Well, Cockett, he was not a pure American--not pure Haole, anyway.

(Civil defense siren testing in background.)

MN: He's Hawaiian-Haole. And he was a nice man, though. Before he started the soda works, he had the wine store. Liquor store. He used to sell wine mostly. And I think he did good on that. And Yamamoto, I think, was working for him. Then, I don't know whether it was during that Prohibition or not. You know, no liquor was to be sold, eh? That's when I think he had to quit [in 1918], because he couldn't sell, anyway. Then, I think, they started the soda works, the both of them. I don't remember exactly whether it was that time or not, but I think it was that way. And they did well at the beginning. Then when they closed down, I had to quit. That was simply, I think, because Coca-Cola took over. [See interview with Bernice Leilani Cockett Fehr for more information on her father, John Cockett.]

WN: What was the name of the soda, the brand name? Was it Asahi?

MN: Yeah. You mean, the soda? Well, the Asahi Soda is on the bottle. Orange, lemon, root beer. The label, we used to put on.

WN: Oh, yeah? And was Asahi?

MN: Asahi, yeah. Manufactured by Asahi. Yeah, then I started to work in the [Kōloa Plantation] Store after they [Asahi Ice and Soda Works] closed.

WN: Yeah, so 1931, yeah?

MN: Yeah.

WN: You know, it's about lunchtime, so. . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 15-20-2-87 and 15-21-2-87

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Mitsugi Nishihara (MN)

April 15, 1987

Kōloa, Kaua'i

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Mitsugi Nishihara on April 15, 1987, at his home in Kōloa. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Nishihara, what we're going to do today is to talk about from 1931 when you started working for the Kōloa Plantation Store. How did you get the job?

MN: I got the job because there was an opening. The reason why I started to work there was because the soda works closed where I was working. Because it closed I was looking for a job. I needed a job, anyway. But just when it [i.e., the Asahi Ice and Soda Works] was closed, I heard that there was an opening because that fella that was a salesman for that section there, quit because he was from Honolulu. So the job opening was there, so I applied. I got it right away. That's how I started to work there.

WN: Was it a raise in pay?

MN: No, it's a cut in pay. (Chuckles) I think I was getting about eighty dollars [at the soda works]. Then when I started to work in the store, it was cut down to half. But what can I do? I had to get a job. Of course, I can go back to the plantation. There's an opening always there, but I felt the store would be better. More chances, eh?

WN: Who first hired you? Who was the manager?

MN: The manager was Maxey, Mr. Maxey.

WN: Homer Maxey?

MN: Homer Maxey.

WN: What type of a man was he?

MN: Nice man. Very smart and nice man. Man of few words, but on the job. Smart man. And I worked for him long time, though.

WN: What was your first job with the store?

MN: I was a salesman. Outside salesman. I had a certain section that I had to go to, which was 'Aipō. That's a farming section. And so, I dealt with farmers. Because of farmers, they bought lot of feeds, like chicken feed, and pig feed, and horse feed, barley, and so forth. So, it was hard work. Of course, I had a truck, you know, old truck. But prior to that, those salesmen, all with horse and buggy, you know. Hard work, that. I believe it was hard work. I never did that, but. I had a junk truck, but it took me all right. But then the delivery was all those heavy things--hundred pounds, most of them. And because of farmer, the area is big, the house is not right by the road. So, I had to carry that to the house, and, boy, that's hard job. But I had to do it (chuckles) in order to survive.

WN: Where exactly is 'Aipō?

MN: 'Aipō was between Lāwa'i and here, in the valley there. And not only there. I used to go over there and I used to go down to Kukui'ula (Camp). Then there was a place called Shiken Hausu. (Chuckles)

WN: Shiken Hausu?

MN: Shiken Hausu is Japanese, meaning "four houses." Four houses there. But there were more than four houses. Originally, probably, there were four houses. But when I went, there were about ten houses. Kukui'ula. Then I used to come back. But it was really hard work. But I did survive, somehow. (Chuckles)

WN: So, what did you do as a salesman, exactly? You had to go take orders first?

MN: I take orders, then the next day, I deliver to their place. And then, at the end of the month, I had to collect. And the collection, again, is hard with farmers. Depends on the farming they do and if it's not well produced, well, naturally, they cannot pay. Oh, those days, the collection was real hard.

WN: What kind of farming did they do?

MN: Mostly vegetation and pig farming, and all that kind.

WN: Mostly Japanese?

MN: And some pineapple. They used to raise pineapple. Mostly Japanese, yeah. In fact, all Japanese. Japanese were plentiful, those days.

WN: So, how many times a week would you go to the same house to take orders?

MN: Practically every other day. So, about three, four times a week.

Well, that's my route. So, I make the rounds. And usually, I go that section practically every day but not the same house. Some, I had the hardest time try to sell. Sometimes they buy only one bread just to please me, you know. Going that distance, just to please me, one bread. (Chuckles) Disappointing, but nevertheless, if you don't go, you don't get anything.

(Laughter)

MN: Because lot of competition, eh? Not only Kōloa Store was going there [to the camps], but lot of individual stores used to go.

WN: Like what other stores went?

MN: Okumura Store. And there was that Ebata Store and Sueoka Store. And Yamamoto Store. Yeah, several stores. Usually, those days, we used to have what they call the "new month." You see, not the first of the month to the first of the month. On the 20[th] of the month, we give them new month. On the new month, that's when they buy heavily because they have over a month to pay. And so, that's when they buy their heavy things.

WN: So, if you buy something on March 20, you don't have to pay until beginning . . .

MN: First of the [month after the] following month.

WN: May 1?

MN: May 1, yeah. But still, some people had a hard time. The plantation people didn't have too much difficulty because they get regular pay. Every month, they get. Nevertheless, with big family, of course, they have a hard time. But not like the farmers. Sometime, they can't raise as much. Due to the weather probably they cannot raise good vegetables like that. Then, they can't sell. Nothing to sell.

WN: Did they have to pay the whole bill at one time?

MN: Supposedly, (chuckles) but many times they leave a balance. But that's how it was. Whatever they can't pay, they leave a balance. But some, sometimes they can't pay at all.

WN: So you kept your own records?

MN: No. We had an office in the store there where they kept the record. Then, they'll remind me, "Hey, so-and-so hasn't paid yet. So-and-so hasn't paid." So, then, I have to contact them. (Chuckles)

WN: How did you feel about doing something like that?

MN: Oh, it was hard. Because they'll tell you, "I don't have the money. I can't pay."

"Yeah, but you have to pay something because at least, you know, we're feeding you. By golly, you have to at least pay something."

"I don't have the money. How I'm going to pay you? What you going to do with me?"

Some get real mad, you know, if you insist. "What you going to do?" Some of them, they'll tell, "You going kill me? Go ahead, do it. I can't pay anyway." (Chuckles)

Yeah, that's how it was. It was hard times, those days.

WN: Did some of the people try to make good friends with you so that, you know, when it comes time to collect, you won't be strict with them . . .

MN: Oh. No, no. It's regular routine work. But as a whole, nice people. Very nice. Usually, I used to deal with the women, because the husbands go out to work and they're not back yet. I usually go maybe about two o'clock, three o'clock at that time. Nice people. You know, they have the Japanese way where if--even the salesmen those days--but as a whole, now, if your friend comes over, they always invite them to tea or something like that. No matter where you go those days. You don't find that today. Of course, if your good friend, "Come on, have coffee," like that. But not if [just] anybody comes. [In those days], tea, right away. Tea and cookies or something. When I used to go out, salesman, same thing. Tea.

And there were lot of Okinawan people there. Nice people. I still remember. I guess that was one of their favorites, that yaki udon. Yeah, fried udon. And, oh, I used to like that. (Chuckles) Every time they used to take out that, and tea. One family, especially, Tokuda. Nice, nice lady, that was. When I think about that. Because those days, times were hard for me yet, eh? And that was a treat, really. That was only one year, I went around. I was still single. Just my father and I. And (chuckles) you know what kind of food we eat.

WN: What did you eat?

MN: I tell you. Even when I was working on the plantation, practically potato and rice only. Fried potato today and shoyu-cooked potato next day, with rice.

WN: Regular potato or . . .

MN: Regular Irish potato, yeah. It was good and I still like it, but you try eat that every day. You get sick and tired. And it was a treat when people used to invite me to something different. After one year I was there, then I was promoted to Japanese department head.

WN: So, what was like a typical day? What was your schedule like from

the time you came to work at the store in the morning?

MN: You mean, when I was a salesman or . . .

WN: Salesman.

MN: Oh, salesman? Well, I make my orders. I take the order the previous day. Then the next day, I make [i.e., fill] my orders. And that usually takes until about lunch or little after. Then go out already, deliver.

WN: You put 'em in boxes and stuff or what?

MN: No, (chuckles) those days, some things in packages, but mostly wrapped up. Wrapped and then tied with string. All that extra work. Today, well, if they order corned beef or pork and beans like that, you just dump 'em in the box, then take it over. But of course, today, all shopping center. But those days, maybe each order now, say if they order three [cans of] corned beef. You wrapped up in the paper and tie it up. Look, all that extra work you had. That's why it takes about a half day to do all that.

WN: About how many houses are we talking about?

MN: Daily?

WN: Yeah. Roughly.

MN: Roughly, I would say, about twenty. That was when I was going out. But after that, when I was in the store as a Japanese department head, I used to attend to salesmen that used to come from Honolulu. Japanese salesmen who comes to take orders. And then, I check up whatever I need in Japanese goods. Then, I order. I don't have to consult anybody. I have (been) given the orders to do it. So I used to order all that.

WN: Okay. So, then, when you were a salesman, going back to when you were a salesman, until lunchtime you're doing the order?

MN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: And then, what?

MN: And then, we pack all those things in boxes. And then, we put in the truck, then start delivering after lunch. I had my lunch, and then I go out. Deliver all that and take orders for the following day again.

WN: At the same time?

MN: Yeah, yeah. But, now, say if I don't go to that section the following day, then I take order for two days later, when I go again.

WN: And so, sometimes, you were saying, had the heavy bags and things.

MN: Yeah, yeah. That's new month time.

WN: Sometimes, what, you would make more than one trip back to the truck?

MN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. All hundred pounds before. Rice, hundred pounds. Scratch feed, hundred pounds. And middling, ninety pounds. Barley, seventy-five pounds. And you cannot---like me, I can't carry two. One at a time. The distance some places are quite far. The farmers, eh? And gosh, you try do that (chuckles). That's only the new month time, though. Only the new month time is difficult. Why? Because everybody wants on that new month time. (Chuckles) If I can just deliver today and next day, and so forth, all right. But they want it that day. That's where it makes it difficult. But of course, then, I'm not covering everywhere. As I say, every other day, I go that place.

WN: It seems like they were waiting for that twentieth to come . . .

MN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Toward close to the twentieth day, they don't buy already. They hold back waiting for the new month.

WN: Nobody asked you to make new month more early or anything?

MN: Oh, they do, they do. (Chuckles) But you can't do it, according to regulation. Not only the heavy things, but they're going to buy other things, too. Canned goods and so forth. Because those heavy things are mainly for the animals. The only thing they buy for their family is that rice. All hundred pounds. Today, you never find hundred pounds. All twenty-five, fifty is the limit. Maybe you buy only ten pounds a month, eh? You?

WN: Me? Oh, less than that.

(MN and WN discuss rice.)

MN: Those days, no such thing as bread. Rice.

WN: So, besides being invited over for tea and some food, did you get involved at all with families' like parties or anything like that?

MN: Yeah, when they have a wedding like that, naturally, they'd invite me so I go over. Because we become friendly. Although, in my case, it was only one year, so not that close, yet.

Quite a difference today. All cash today. No problem.

WN: Where exactly was the Kōloa Store?

MN: Kōloa Store is where the Big Save store [i.e., Big Save Value Center] is today. Yeah, that section there. The original Kōloa

Store was still there and probably they would have still used it, renovating it, but it got burnt when Big Save took over. Big Save has a kitchen today. They started with a kitchen in the store. Not in the store, but on the side of the store. And I understand that the fire started from the kitchen, probably the gas stove or something like that. And the whole store was burnt down.

WN: Oh. While it was still operating?

MN: Yeah, yeah. They were operating. Then they built a new one, eh? That's why, this [present Big Save] store is rather new.

WN: Where that Kōloa Plantation Store, was that the original location?

MN: No, no. The original location was where the First Hawaiian Bank is today. Of course, that's [i.e., the bank] an entirely new building. That's where the original Kōloa Plantation Store was. Of course, I wasn't working there yet. I didn't work there, in fact.

But those days, the steamboat used to come over there at Kōloa Landing with all the freight. Then from there, there was a long railroad running up to the store. So it was transported all with train, locomotive. No trucks or anything. At the beginning.

WN: So, from Kōloa Landing, it went to the mill and then the store?

MN: Yeah, that's how it was. Then they had a warehouse more in the camp there where they stored some goods. And from there, they used to deliver that to the store on these wagons. Horse and wagon. No trucks, those days. (Chuckles)

WN: So, when you started in '31, it was already at the Big Save location?

MN: That's right. That old Kōloa Plantation Store was there quite long, though. That First Hawaiian [Bank] went up there, then they break that down and built this new building [in 1953]. But it was there quite long. It used to be where the youngsters used to gather and play over there. It was just like a hall where the youngsters used to get together. [The Kōloa Plantation Store moved to the site of the present Big Save Value Center in the late 1920s. The old building became the Filipino social hall and was torn down in 1953 to make room for the present First Hawaiian Bank building.]

WN: Because the camps were right behind?

MN: Yeah, right behind. That's right.

WN: Besides you, how many other order takers, salesmen, were there?

MN: Besides me, there's one go down the [New] Mill [Camp], then in the camp. . . . Oh, probably about three or four, yeah? Did you go and see Chester Furukawa?

WN: Not yet.

MN: Oh, yeah. Try go see him. He used to be the mill branch manager.

WN: Oh, the mill had a branch store?

MN: Branch store [i.e., there was a smaller branch of Kōloa Store located near the mill]. Later on, you know. He wasn't the first one, but. There used to be a man called Tadayoshi Yamada. But he's dead already. But Chester took over. He was there until the Kōloa Store closed. He was the branch manager. Then there's a Hideshi Muraoka and the wife. They both were working for the store, too.

WN: The main store?

MN: In that . . .

WN: The mill?

MN: No, not the mill. The main store, yeah.

WN: What about the non-Japanese? Did they have to have, you know, like Filipino salesmen to go to the Filipino families?

MN: Exactly. We had a Filipino, Vicente Bargayo. He's still living, you know. [Vicente Bargayo died in 1989.]

WN: Oh? He was a salesman?

MN: Yeah. He sure had to work hard during the new month, too. Ho, the rice he had to deliver. But when he started to deliver, was [by] truck already. Not wagon. But hard work, hard work. Then we had a Portuguese salesman, Caesar Vasconcellos. He died, though. And he used to run around the Portuguese and the Puerto Rican section. Those were the real good old days.

WN: So, were there a lot of people who walked into the store to buy?

MN: Yeah, yeah. And those days, it wasn't these counters like today, [where] you go and pick whatever you want. It [i.e., merchandise] was back of the counter where the salesmen would wrap up and whatnot, and charge. It was back of there on the high shelf. All the shelves. All the can goods were there. And they'd come there and they'd say, "Oh, I want that and I want this." And when they buy, maybe, say, half-dozen can of milk, then they have to likewise wrap that up and string it up. (Chuckles) We had a dry goods department, too, hardware department. We had all the departments. It was general [merchandise].

WN: So, you know, if you work for the plantation and you bought from the store, you just charge with your bango?

MN: Mainly the Filipinos. The Filipinos, practically all were single,

yet. Whoever comes and pay regularly, then we don't go through that. But we used to charge everything practically by the bangō. They have limited income but they don't budget that thing and figure it out. So they overbuy. Then, we cannot collect. Because the Filipinos, practically everything were deducted from the pay at the office. And so, later on, especially those that overbuy, we used to give them coupons. Maybe, say, their pay is monthly, twenty-six dollars. Then, we try to give them twenty dollars coupon. So they cannot buy anymore. They cannot buy with anything else but the coupon.

WN: Oh. These were only the ones who overbuy?

MN: That's right. Even Japanese. That's what we did later on, with the plantation people.

WN: So, if they wanted to buy something, and you remember them as being a customer that had coupons, so they can only buy so much?

MN: That's right. Without the coupon, no. Because some people, somehow, they don't budget. Well, again, you cannot blame them, especially with big families, eh? They need that food. But again, if you careful, somehow, you get along. But some, at the new month time, they just buy recklessly. Not considering this have to last one month. They just buy up.

WN: Sometimes, as a salesman, do you advise them like, "I think this [is] too much?"

MN: No, I never did because in this case here, I don't know whether that's (chuckles) too much or not for them, you know?

WN: You said that for some people, the plantation did deduct from the paycheck?

MN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Were there instances of people running away before paying the bill?

MN: Yeah. Usually, the single people. And those days, no banks around. And so, what the Japanese used to do was, they make tanomoshi. You heard about that, eh?

WN: Yeah.

MN: Which really helped them, though. I guess without that lot of them would have lot of difficulty. With that tanomoshi made for them, they can pay up. Then they pay the tanomoshi regularly, monthly. But even the tanomoshi, sometimes some of them, they cannot pay. They run away. (Chuckles) Then the witnesses have to pay, tanomoshi.

WN: How did a tanomoshi work?

MN: Tanomoshi, now, say for instance, you feel that you want some money, a certain amount. And so, you go to your friends and then ask them if they could make a tanomoshi. And, "How much you want?"

"Oh, so much."

Okay. Then, if you go on a big basis like twenty dollars, difficult, most of them. So, probably, they make a ten-dollar tanomoshi or five-dollar tanomoshi. But if they want a big amount, then you have to have more people. So the friends go around and ask the people if you want to join tanomoshi, whose tanomoshi it is. That's how they get the people. When they get the full amount, sufficient for that person that wants the tanomoshi, then they start that thing. And then, the first payment, everybody pays. Maybe if it's ten dollars, everybody, maybe twenty people, pays ten dollars each. That's \$200. Okay. Then the \$200 comes in, and this \$200 is given to this man that had the tanomoshi made. Without any interest. That's the help they make.

But this person, for twenty months, he has to go and collect from all these people. But not necessarily from all the people. Those who took the money already, then you don't have to collect. I mean, you don't have to bring back to them the interest. But you have to go and collect. That's hard work. But they were helped. So, naturally, they do that. Then, the tanomoshi night, it's a set night, the friends who made the tanomoshi would come and then figure out if they have the \$200 and all that, and whatnot. Then this person that had the tanomoshi made had to have coffee and different things, (chuckles) and sake, and everything. Treat them. That's monthly. It's hard work, but nevertheless, they were helped. So, tanomoshi was real strong, those days.

WN: Then, the next time, it's another person's turn to get the \$200?

MN: Yeah, they bid on it.

WN: Yeah, they bid.

MN: Yeah, monthly, they bid on it. The highest bidder gets it.

WN: So whoever needs the money sooner . . .

MN: They're going to bid high.

WN: The bid becomes the interest rate?

MN: That's right, that's right. The bid is the interest rate. So those people who have money, the big interest coming every month. Sometimes, [with] a ten-dollar tanomoshi, because they need the money so much, five dollars, 50 percent, they bid. They need the money.

WN: So, if you don't need the money and you wait . . .

MN: Oh, you make the money.

WN: You make good money.

MN: That's why, some people who has money, they join the tanomoshi. Say, for instance, it's a ten-dollar tanomoshi. And then, if five dollars return, look the money. That's why, they have the ten-dollar tanomoshi going on, five dollar return, they go into another five-dollar tanomoshi. Both ways, they make interest. That's people with money. (Chuckles) So, they get richer. (Chuckles) But not too many of that kind, those days. You know, hard time. Because those days, no birth control. Not like today. That's why, they had the hardest time. Shee, you know Dr. Waterhouse who used to be the doctor over here? How much he insisted on them for birth control. But no way, unless you do something. Because lot of them had eight, nine, ten, up to twelve [children], you know. Somehow, but, they lived, though.

WN: People were telling me about the way they used to show movies in the old days. What do you remember about that?

MN: In the old days, they used to have movies and that's the only thing we had, anyway. No television, no radio, nothing at all. So, those days, when we were, say, for instance, kids yet. If, those days, you were able to work already, the plantation will hire you summertime. Pay you quarter one day. The parents used to say, "You earn only quarter and you bring more than quarter worth of lunch." (Chuckles) So, it's no gain at all. But nevertheless, it's good for the children instead of fooling around.

You know, those days, we can leave the door open and go anywhere we want. No such thing as robbery and all that. No such thing as somebody knife you or anything like that. Of course, sometimes they fight, but never enter the home and anything of that sort happened. Of course, we had junk houses, but we never did lock the door and go out. Nobody ever came in. Because the kids used to go to work from small time, they didn't have the time to go fool around. Not like today, you know.

And so, if, say, you work all week, then the luna--the luna is the supervisor of the children--he takes you to that show. Matinee, you know. And those days, used to be only ten cents. But, oh, boy, we were happy because we don't have the ten cents. (Chuckles) That's how we were treated to shows, like that. Although later on, when you get to youthhood already, then you go on your own.

WN: What about those Japanese shows that people used to come around with the generator and show movies? You remember that?

MN: Way before the theaters?

WN: Yeah, yeah.

MN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Those days, rather than shows with those

generators and so forth, they used to have the real actors come in from Japan.

WN: Oh, shibai?

MN: Shibai, yeah. And that was popular. We used to have a hall over there [i.e., Iwamura Theater], right opposite the [present] post office there. There's an ice cream parlor there [today]. Back of that there used to be a hall. And shibai all the time used to come. Shibai, naniwa-bushi, that's the singing. You ever heard?

WN: Naniwa-bushi?

MN: Yeah. You ever heard how they sing?

WN: Yeah, yeah. Some of that.

MN: (Chuckles) It's silly today. I used to like that. Oh, I used to like that. But [if] you understand them, it's more interesting. Not only the way they sing. The singing is real good, you know. But hardly any today. Sometimes I hear through the television like that. Mostly singing, yeah? Those days was naniwa-bushi, very popular. And shibai. Shee, that shibai was popular. Many times, especially those drinkers. . . . There weren't any benches. They [audience] just sit on the floor with goza. And (chuckles) instead of [watching the] shibai, [they were] drinking. They having a party. Some of them, you know. They used to enjoy that. And we had lot of these acrobats come in. That was interesting. But we have to go, though, here and there, you know.

WN: Oh, oh, oh. Not only Kōloa?

MN: Not only Kōloa. Especially those acrobats, like Līhu'e mostly or Hanapepe like that, yeah? They don't go everywhere. So you have to go there. Just like the carnival and whatnot. You don't have everywhere.

WN: They used to come from Japan and tour?

MN: Yeah. Japan--especially come for that purpose, you see?

WN: How did they advertise these things?

MN: (Chuckles) Advertising? They don't advertise through [news]papers and whatnot. [If] the play's going be tonight in Kōloa, okay, then on the car with the drum, bam! bam! bam! bam!, and they yelling, "We going to have tonight at the certain place," what kind of show, and whatnot. They do that every night, they go around. As long as the show will be there. That's the only way they could advertise. Of course, they used to have posters up, though. Big posters, you know. With pictures on. That's the only way. (Chuckles)

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: Okay, so after you spent one year as a salesman, you became the head of the Japanese department?

MN: Yeah.

WN: How did you get a promotion like that?

MN: There was an opening. The [previous] head of the department, [Jiro] Kunioka who was there, was promoted to office work. That's right close to the [store] manager, in the same room. The manager was [previously] the office man, the bookkeeper there. Then he was promoted to manager. So the department head of the Japanese department was promoted to bookkeeper. He said he didn't know anything, but the manager was so nice. He said, "No, I'm going to (teach) you." And he did learn. He became a good bookkeeper. He died, of course. Both of them died.

That's how I got that position. I don't know how---I was a new man yet there, but I was selected. (Chuckles)

WN: Was it a raise in pay?

MN: Yeah. Right there and then, I think I got sixty dollars.

WN: What were your duties?

MN: My duties were ordering [for] the Japanese department. That means [dealing with] salesmen that come from Honolulu. That was one of the jobs. And then, I used to be the warehouse head, too. If freights come in, I have to tell the boys, "Hey, come, come. We have to unload the rice." The rice comes by hundreds. And there's no lift or anything. All hand work. And so, you cannot just pile all the way like that. No room. If hundreds of the bags, the whole warehouse will be just lined up with it. So, what we did was, we used to pile in fours, like this. And four again like this. Then the next one we put over that so it won't fall down, eh? Just cross it over. And we used to pile high, about ten or twelve. And you know, two men, we used to grab that and throw. And up there, somebody grabs that and pile it up. Hard work, that was hard.

WN: This is like what? Rice and things?

MN: Rice, and scratch feed, and barley, and middling, all those things. Hard work, yeah. But we all did that together. I was in charge over there in the warehouse, but then I can't just look at them. I do it just as much as they did. That was one time when the whole gang has to come, the boys, you know. Then, next time, probably, we get all case goods come in. That again, we had only a small hand truck. Probably you can pile about four or five cases of can goods. We used to haul that and then pile it up. All the way up there. But that, well, I don't have to get the whole gang, you know.

Certain amount of people, enough, with the hand truck. We don't have to throw, like the rice.

WN: Who would unload it from the. . . . Was it from locomotive or . . .

MN: No, no. Truck. Yeah, at that time was truck delivery already. Big trucks.

WN: That time, was Kōloa Landing still in operation?

MN: No, no, no. No more. That was out already. That was old Kōloa Plantation Store time. When we moved down there already, no, no more.

WN: But it was coming mostly to Port Allen?

MN: Port Allen and Nāwiliwili. Nāwiliwili was mostly inter-island goods. But Port Allen was the main [port for] Mainland goods, like rice and so forth. Because we used to order quite a bit of direct shipment. All the bills of all the different merchandise comes in. I have to check the bills. When the rice comes in, when the can goods come in, I have to check every one so that we get the right amount according to the bill of lading. And I used to do all that.

Sometimes, from Honolulu especially, when I order the Japanese goods or, say, for instance, any other thing we order from Honolulu, it comes in cases. Then I pile that certain place. Then I have to open that, check the price, and I had to price it. I did all the pricing. I put a certain percentage [markup]. And those days, no more computer, you know. All head work. I didn't have even one adding machine. They never give me adding machine even. And usually, the price used to be priced per dozen. So, I had to figure. Divide by twelve in order to get the price of one. Then by so doing, I would add the rate of the percentage, and then I'll mark that thing. Those days, all with pencil. Today, you know, they have all the stamps, eh? Those days, all pencil. Not pencil, but you know the dark, black . . .

WN: China marker?

MN: China marker.

WN: Did you have to know what the competition was selling? At what price?

MN: No. Well, we check up sometimes. But usually, pretty close. The only thing is, many times, we're cheaper because we buy in quantity. Then, probably, if we had the same percentage, we get better [i.e., had higher profits or volume of sales]. Those days again, plantation store was their own, so they didn't have any rental to pay, although they figure in their books maybe, that you supposed to pay a rental to the plantation. That's only through the books. In reality, you don't have to pay. But the individual stores, now, if

they have to rent the place, then they have to add the rental to it. So it makes [prices] higher as a whole. We, anyway, being the big store, we had the bulk of the business.

WN: So, Kōloa Plantation [prior to 1948] was Amfac [American Factors, Ltd.]?

MN: Yeah, Amfac.

WN: So, did you deal a lot with Amfac to get the goods?

MN: Oh, yes. Especially those things that Amfac handles, we have to practically buy [only] from them.

WN: Such as what?

MN: Oh, hardware. There used to be an Amfac Store in Hanapepē.

And then, salesmen used to come. You know, grocery salesmen, hardware salesmen, lumber salesmen, all the salesmen used to come. And I used to order. That's why, I have lot of work. I used to order all those things, hardware, dry goods, groceries, feed, and everything.

WN: All [from] Amfac?

MN: Amfac. But most of the big things, or even dry goods, even hardware, if we need in big quantity, then we'll import. Groceries, especially, we used to import a lot. The fast sellers, big sellers, like rice, feed, milk, and so forth. Those days, used to be Carnation milk. That was the baby food. Carnation milk. They didn't want any other brand. You know, those days, the people were very, very brand conscious. Corned beef, Libby's or nothing. Milk, Carnation or nothing. They were so conscious about the brand. Not like today, price is more important as a whole, regardless. Of course, there may be a slight difference, no doubt. That's why, maybe, they liked that. But today, nobody considers that. They buy any brand. (Chuckles)

WN: Did Amfac supply the private stores, too, with goods?

MN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They used to contact all the stores. Grocery salesmen, only groceries they sell. Hardware salesmen, hardware only. Lumber salesmen. All the different salesmen used to come around.

Then, vegetables. All the farmers come, bring the vegetables over. I used to buy all the vegetables. We had that cooler where we put the vegetables. I used to take all the old ones and I used to put all the new ones. I had plenty work. But I liked it very much.

WN: You said you were the head of the Japanese department. What exactly was the Japanese department?

MN: The Japanese goods only.

WN: Food, you mean?

MN: Food, and hardware, dry goods, everything.

WN: Oh, but Japanese[-made]?

MN: Japanese goods.

WN: What do you mean by hardware?

MN: Hardware like, say, hōchō.

WN: Oh, I see.

MN: All that Japanese hardware. Hōchō, and kama--sickle, yeah? And then, that small saw. Lot of hardware.

WN: What Honolulu companies did you folks deal with?

MN: Oh, those days, I still remember, was Fujii and Company, Fujii [Junichi] Shōten [Ltd.], yeah? And Sumida Shōten [T. Sumida & Co.]. Iida Shōten [S.M. Iida Suisando]. That's hardware. Lot of them I forgot already.

WN: What about other big companies, like Theo H. Davies like that? Did you deal with them, too?

MN: Yeah, yeah. We used to deal in certain things that Amfac don't have. Usually, Amfac first. But if people demand for other brands that Amfac doesn't have, then we'll get it for them. Those days, like the man's trousers, that's working pants, 'āhina pants, you know, the Union Company--I don't know, I don't think they are existing anymore, but . . .

WN: No, I don't think so.

MN: Oh, they used to make a lot of that, and we used to buy lots of that. Just like today, you'll find that Levi and whatnot? Union, they used to make in Honolulu, you know. Japanese company. Boy, we used to sell lots of that.

WN: I was wondering, when you were a salesman, did you take orders for dry goods, too?

MN: Anything, anything they want. But usually, dry goods, if, say, they want a spool of thread like that, then they know what they want. But say, material like that, they have to come to the store and buy. They have to see what kind they want. Those days, material were the thing, yeah? Dresses, people [rarely] buy dresses. Material. They make their own. We used to sell lot of material.

WN: So there was Japanese department, dry goods department, lumber department, what else?

MN: Hardware. And that grocery department. Vegetable department. Then, we had the meat department, too. But at the beginning we didn't sell any beef, you know. We used to sell pork and other things. Sausages, whatnot. But later on, we had the full department of the meats.

WN: Didn't the plantation have a butcher shop?

MN: They did, but when we started to handle, they used to bring that [i.e., meat] to the store to sell. That's when we started to have all the different cuts. You can buy the different cuts. When the butcher shop was up in the plantation there, you can't buy those cuts. We had a regular butcher department and butcher shop--the meat department, rather. At that department, we had two men working there. One of them used to run that department. I had nothing to do with that department. At the beginning I used to order all the dry goods, you know, all the material. But later on, was too much for me, so the boss transferred that to one of the ladies in the dry goods department, who headed the dry goods department.

WN: I see. So, you were head of the Japanese department, but yet you were in charge of ordering for the whole store?

MN: Practically, at the beginning.

WN: What about the other managers of the other departments?

MN: No more other managers. [Only] department heads. I used to do all the ordering at the beginning. The only order that the boss, the manager, Mr. Maxey, used to order was the Mainland import goods like rice and so forth. But he always had to consult me. "How many you think you'll need"; "How many you think of this?" We always used to get together. Because he wouldn't know. But I would know, more or less, how much we sell through the amount that comes in and how many we have left now, and whatnot. You cannot overorder because you're going to have oversupply.

WN: So you were like second in command, then?

MN: I was really. The manager was just manager, head. Just by name, that's all. He was a nice man. I did practically everything at the beginning. Then we started to have department heads--meat department, dry goods department. Those are the only departments that we had department heads. But others, I still continued. Lumber, I used to order; furniture, I used to order, like beds and whatnot. Those, we used to import.

WN: I'm wondering, how big was the store? Was it bigger than the Big Save is now?

MN: It's the same size, as far as the size is concerned. Of course, different arrangements, though.

WN: How many employees do you think the store had when you first started?

MN: Chee, probably about twenty, yeah?

WN: From the manager, down?

MN: Yeah. I think about that. Yeah, probably about that.

WN: So when you started in '31, it was about depression time, yeah?

MN: Yeah, yeah.

WN: Did that affect the store at all?

MN: Well, at that time when I first entered that place, I didn't know the condition of the store, whether it was depression effects or not, because I don't know how much they sell in those days, you know. I really didn't know. But after I became department head and whatnot, things were normal. It didn't affect.

WN: So, you said twenty employees, but the time you left, about how many were there? Was there a big increase?

MN: We all had to quit because the store closed.

WN: Was there an increase in the number of employees?

MN: No, I don't think there was any increase because that's about the maximum you need. Of course, we used to have part-time workers. Quite a few part-time workers used to come fill the shelves and whatnot. But I don't know how many years after the rearrangements of the counters and whatnot. You know, we started that shopping center style.

WN: Oh, cash and carry?

MN: Cash and carry. But it wasn't cash and carry yet. Yeah, it wasn't cash and carry. But serve yourself. We didn't have to serve them anymore.

WN: When was this about?

MN: Chee, let's see. The [new] manager was [Charles] Senger and. . . . I wonder if was about the '50s, I think. Nineteen fifties. That's when we had to make the counters, all lined up like that. Then we put all the goods on there. They come and serve themselves. But at the beginning, the shoplifting was terrible. You cannot watch them, eh?

WN: What caused you folks to change?

MN: Because it was gradually changing to that.

WN: You mean, the other stores did that, too?

MN: Yeah. Not the small stores necessarily, but the big stores. Like Lihu'e Store, McBryde Store, and whatnot.

WN: Was there less need for salesmen by that time?

MN: Well, probably less, a little, but we didn't take them out unless they quit or maybe they went to another job, then we won't rehire.

WN: Oh, I see. So, things were changing then?

MN: Yeah, yeah. Let's see, when we quit, I guess it was less, too. Not counting the part-time workers, I think was much less.

WN: What was the store like during the war? Any changes?

MN: During the war, not too much changes except Japanese goods. It won't come in. Other than that, not much difference. But one difference was, sometimes, you order Mainland goods, it won't come in on time. Due to the different course [the ships] had to take or they have to avoid certain things. So that had something to do.

WN: What about Japanese foods?

MN: Japanese foods were lacking. They won't come in from [Japan] anymore. But that didn't affect again. Because the rice, we get from the Mainland. Long before, I know we used to eat Japan rice. We didn't have any Mainland rice at those days. And we had Kaua'i rice. Rice was grown in Hanalei [and] Waimea. But the Kaua'i rice, they used to sell cheaper than Japan rice. But the taste was not there. Probably not used to, that's why, because they eat only Japan rice, eh? But I'm definite that the taste was different. No more the starch too much over here. Due to the ground probably. Japan one, really starchy.

Then they started to bring that Mainland rice. The comparison again was big difference. People hated the Mainland rice because they're so used to the Japan rice and the taste was different, too. But gradually, because of the price, the Japan rice just stopped selling. Mainland, now, when they started to eat only that, pau. Everything was Mainland rice. Japan rice was cut down. Kaua'i rice, finally, that's when they had to give up, too.

It's the same thing with, for instance, milk now. When I was kid yet I used to get our milk from the plantation where they had a dairy, which they milked with their hands. And we go and buy at the dairy. We bring our can. And they give you, fill up a quart or whatever it is. Then you come home and you boil that and drink the

milk. You never drank that raw.

Later on, the dairy used to bring over, say, Meadow Gold and whatnot. At the beginning what they used to bring over was milk that was pasteurized, boil little bit. So the butter [i.e., cream] used to get all up there. We got used to that, we liked that. Of course, we don't drink right away because we had to mix it up with (cream) on the top there. Then they changed that to homogenized where you don't have to mix that and drink. You can drink right away. We didn't like it. We told 'em that's no (cream) at all. So the main part is gone, it's just a waste. They don't buy, you know, until they get used to. Once they get used to, they can't change no more. Because they can just grab and drink. Everything is in there, contained, but they had it all mixed up.

WN: Before, when you had to mix up the (cream) from the top, did it have a better taste?

MN: Taste better. Well, taste better because (cream) is on the top. But no, it's a matter of getting used to it. You know, it's the same thing with Coca-Cola. That's why, the soda water--I told you about that, didn't I?

WN: Yeah, yeah.

MN: Yeah, because of that. They finally convinced the people that Coca-Cola is good. And once you get the habit of it, due to that--what is that? Nicotine? Not nicotine.

WN: Caffeine?

MN: Caffeine. It's just like coffee drinkers. Once they start to drink coffee, they must have it. Same thing with Coca-Cola. I've seen milk change and whatnot. Even the rice and whatnot. All changed. But it's a matter of getting used to it.

WN: Talking about Japan goods, what about shoyu?

MN: Yeah, shoyu used to come from Japan only. During the war, because the shoyu from Japan didn't come, they started to make shoyu here, like Diamond Shoyu, Aloha Shoyu. [Sake and shoyu were brewed in Hawai'i prior to World War II.]

WN: Oh, Honolulu?

MN: Yeah. Diamond Shoyu is still continuing, Aloha is still continuing. They used to have Fuji Shoyu, Kokusai Shoyu. All kind shoyu. They started to make sake. Sake likewise, prior to the war, ho, sake used to sell. From Japan now. They didn't make any sake here, you know. We used to sell lot of sake because the Japanese, they like that sake, eh? But when the war came, no sake come from Japan. That's how they started to make sake over here.

WN: Where?

MN: That Fuji Sake [Brewing Co. Ltd.], Kokusai in Hawai'i--Big Island. And then, Diamond--not Diamond. That . . .

WN: Takara Masamune?

MN: Takara Masamune. These three companies.

WN: But nothing on Kaua'i?

MN: No, Kaua'i no more. Even miso, you know. Today, miso don't come from Japan. [Actually, some miso is imported from Japan.] Only over here one [i.e., only locally made miso is sold]. They got used to that, they liked it. Higa [Soy and] Miso. Japan sake still comes, you know. But Takara Masamune, Takara Musume [manufactured by Honolulu Sake Brewery and Ice, Co., Ltd.]. The others all closed up. Kokusai and Fuji, they all closed up. But those products were when the war was here. Japan goods didn't come. And they're still selling, like that Diamond Shoyu [also manufactured by Honolulu Sake Brewery and Ice Co., Ltd.], eh? Kikkoman still comes [from Japan], though, but Diamond still sells.

WN: So, during the war, the salesmen didn't come, too? The ones from Honolulu?

MN: No, no, no. No goods to sell.

WN: I was wondering, when salesmen came from Honolulu, where did they stay?

MN: They stayed in the hotels. Like Kōloa, you know where this Yamamoto Store?

WN: Yeah.

MN: Yeah. Back of that, today, you'll find all those shops, eh? That used to be the [Yamamoto, previously Yamaka] Hotel. That's why they used to have furo, too. The salesman used to stay in that Yamamoto Hotel. Kōloa had only that Yamamoto Hotel. That was not [owned by] Yamamoto originally. Used to be, let's see now, Yamashiroya. We used to call 'em "Yamaka" for short. He had the store there and he had the hotel. And he had a buggy taxi like, you know.

WN: That's unusual name, yeah?

MN: Yeah, it's a long name. Then [Y.] Yamamoto bought that place. That's how he started. And it ended with Yamamoto. The back part was all hotel.

WN: So during the war, did lot of soldiers come into the [plantation] store?

MN: Oh, yeah. Whenever they have a chance. And they used to go all around. During the war, as I said, soda water was scarce. Coca-Cola was scarce. Everything was scarce. So, the restaurants, I know one restaurant especially, Okutsu Store right by the former Kōloa Plantation Store, used to go pick lemons and make lemon juice [lemonade]. And he'd sell 'em all. The soldiers all buy 'em.

WN: What, he used to put 'em in containers?

MN: Yeah, containers. In fact, he might sell 'em by the quart, I think. Oh, he made money that time. Everything used to sell. It used to be a bakery, you know. Used to make manjū and all kind. Then he used to have coffee, whatnot.

WN: Okutsu, yeah?

MN: Yeah, Okutsu Store. Then another one was Chang Fook Store [a.k.a. Chang Fook Kee], long time. It was down there by that [present] Kōloa Broiler.

WN: That was a bakery, too, huh?

MN: Bakery and restaurant. He [Chang Fook] was prosperous. Nice man, he was. I heard he used to make nice Chinese food, but those days, we can't afford the Chinese food. (Laughs) We can't afford restaurant food. We can't go eat at the restaurants, no. But when I was working at the soda company, I used to go drink coffee at Okutsu's in the morning. Yeah, nice man. We used to go and buy coffee. Coffee was very popular. From the [Japanese] Camp right behind there, they'll come to Okutsu and buy the coffee and the manjū, whatever it is. And if you buy the manjū and so forth, you get one pot full of coffee free. (Chuckles)

WN: So, they gave you the pot? Or you bring your own pot?

MN: No, you bring your own pot. Then they'll fill it up for you if you buy the manjū and whatnot.

WN: Yeah? Good deal.

MN: Good deal. And I remember, sometimes we used to buy---there used to be a bread about this size, I think. Oh, about this length.

WN: One foot long?

MN: Not quite one foot, little smaller. And then, kind of oval shaped like this. And what they used to do--that's five cents only--is cut right in the center, put lot of jelly inside. Five cents, only. That was a treat.

WN: What kind jelly?

MN: Guava jelly.

WN: Guava jelly?

MN: Yeah. Guavas, those days, were plentiful. But not too plentiful today, though, because lot of guava factories around, yeah? But those days, in the fields, was nothing but guavas. You can make all the jelly you want. (Chuckles) They used to make lot of jellies, especially those families.

When you look back, you know, what a change, yeah? Today, that's why, you tell to the youngsters, they can hardly believe. But that's how the world changes. Even from now on, those youngsters are young today and, say, fifty years from today, they're going to find lot of changes. No doubt about that. How the world progresses, we don't know. We don't know whether it'll go backwards or not, but nevertheless, it's always progressing.

And how come we have such intelligent people who invents things, who thinks out things, like food, especially now. Before, you cannot buy food like at the kitchen or anything like that. Today, practically everybody, lunch, they go and buy bento and eat. Who thought about all those things, yeah? When you think back, there are smart people. Like for instance, butter, now. The people started to talk, butter is bad for your heart because it's high, the cholesterol, and whatnot. So, they get scared to eat the butter. Then, somebody come and invent the oleo [i.e., margarine]. They all eating oleo today. Probably it's just as bad [for you], but.

(Laughter)

MN: The newspapers and all those ads and whatnot, has lots to do. People believe everything.

WN: I guess, too, oleo is cheaper, eh?

MN: It is, it is. At the beginning, because in competition to butter, they didn't let them color that [oleo] like butter. The original, that's all white, you know. When we started to sell it, it was like that. That's why, people kinda hesitate to buy. Because white, eh? They say it's different. But now, when they allowed them to color that, just like the butter, and then they advertising about your heart and whatnot, look out for the cholesterol, don't eat too much fats, pau, they start to (chuckles) eat oleo. What a change. That's why, even today, like say, pork. It does sell. Pork and meat does sell. But not as much as before, like chicken today, and fish.

WN: Tofu.

MN: Tofu sells. Oh, boy. See, all through newspapers and whatnot. Tofu, once they put it out there, people believe in it. They even have tofu ice cream now.

(Laughter)

WN: Yeah, I know. Now, Haoles on the Mainland eat lot of tofu.

MN: Tofu. And it is good food. I eat one [block] a week. I like it. Good food.

WN: I was wondering, during the first strike, 1946, what was the. . . . Did the store help out the strikers at all in terms of extending credit or anything like that?

MN: No, the store had to be closed.

WN: Is that right?

MN: Because we were connected with the plantation. It was a plantation store. It was a plantation strike, which means the store is the plantation, too. So, it was closed completely. Of course, maybe those individual [i.e., private] stores extended them [i.e., strikers] credit because they don't have any pay, eh? But as far as the [plantation] store, it was closed. That's why, like we, the employees over there, we had to just stay home. But, you know, Sueoka Store was there and Tao [Store], all the other stores were there. So, they survived, no doubt about that.

WN: How did you make out financially without working?

MN: Well, no way. When I was working in the store--I didn't tell you about this. When I was working in the store, not as a salesman but when I was working in there already, there was an opening as water collector for this Kōloa district, for the county. Water collector. Those days, they didn't have a water department where the water department employees come and do everything, only those office people or something like that. But very few. Used to be all collectors from the different districts. And the collectors were on commission. I worked that as part-time. Mainly, I had my own job. So, it was not that interesting. But, you see, my kids were small yet. My oldest boy was probably about four or five, I think. And I felt that on Sundays, I can take them for a ride as if just like picnic. And you don't know how much they enjoyed at the beginning because they going get bento, eh? Mommy will make their bento. Musubi like that. Then on my way go out already, "Daddy, we go eat."

(Laughter)

MN: They only thinking about that. And they go around, riding. They enjoyed. Later on, they didn't enjoy anymore, though. I worked that for seven years.

WN: Exactly doing what, though?

MN: Go out and read the meters, each individual home. Oh, I don't know, had about hundred. And then, I read the meters, I record it in my book, then I send the bills out to each individual. Then, I go and

collect. And that's practically done in one week. I have to do it in one week. Because I cannot go and, "Oh, this part here, I'm going early part of the month." No. I have to do it on the end of the month where I have to send the bill out all one time. That's how it was. Hoo, boy, for that one week, I used to sleep every night after midnight. Hard work.

WN: How many houses?

MN: Oh, over hundred. But I enjoyed it, though. This was 'Ōma'o section, Kukui'ula section, Po'ipū section, and Kōloa--not the plantation, though. Plantation had their own water. All this lower section of Kōloa, all around town. Hard work, hard work. But I enjoyed it. Enjoyed it, why? One way, income. And then, I enjoyed meeting the people. Each individual home, you go. That's why, I knew lot of people. Even today, I know lot of people around 'Ōma'o and whatnot. And then, I used to go from section to section. Today, when I go to 'Ōma'o now, oh, what a big change over there. Those days, no more houses too much. Today, it's all filled with houses. Po'ipū section, too, no more hotels, no more all those condominiums and whatnot. Very few homes. I used to enjoy going and talking to them. But look, the big change today.

WN: Did you have trouble collecting from anybody?

MN: Sure, sure. Then I have to tell them, "You have to pay, otherwise we have to close the water." (Chuckles) Somehow, they come through. Then look the cash I get. Not checks those days, all cash. I bring home and I scared, eh? And one time, I felt that if somebody come around and try to steal, then they going check certain places like drawers and whatnot, under the bed maybe. So, I put this cash that I collected in the rubbish box. (Chuckles) Then, I couldn't think where I left it. Oh, I hunted high and low for it. Finally, I found that. I had over a hundred dollars, you know, inside there. You scared if somebody rob it, then you have to pay, eh? Then I had the county auditors, about two or three of them, come every month, check my books. Everything was perfect, though. They said, "Oh, boy, perfect."

WN: So, from when to when did you do that?

MN: You mean, what years?

WN: Yeah.

MN: Oh, I don't remember exactly when it was. They did away with that department and they started that water department with their own employees. That's when I quit, because it was over. I went for seven years . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 15-21-2-87; SIDE ONE

WN: You quit during the war?

MN: No, no. I quit because they did away with that water collectors. You didn't see this Miyahara, yet? My neighbor . . .

WN: Yoshiichi [Miyahira]?

MN: Yeah.

WN: Yeah, yeah.

MN: Oh, you saw him?

WN: Yeah, I talked to him.

MN: He was the accountant for that Kaua'i Motors.

WN: Kaua'i Motors, yeah. So, you know, in 1948, Grove Farm and Kōloa Plantation merged. You were now under Grove Farm. Did that change the store at all? Store operations?

MN: No, no change.

WN: No change?

MN: No, no change. The [store] manager and us, all, we stay all together. Only the plantation manager changed.

WN: But you folks weren't under Amfac anymore, though, huh? Or were you?

MN: Ah, no. Under Grove Farm. It wasn't Amfac, you see.

WN: Did that change at all? Did you go to someone else or did you rely still on Amfac?

MN: We still, yeah. Because that [Amfac] was the biggest wholesaler anyway, over here.

WN: Were there any layoffs or people moving to a different store or anything like that?

MN: No, no. The employees still continued. No change at all. Grove Farm, it was under Mr. [William M.] Moragne, [Sr.]. He was the plantation manager [1953-69]. Nice, smart man. During the time when he was the manager, [Grove Farm] Plantation made money. And we, as supervisors, we got bonuses.

WN: I think before Mr. Moragne was [William P.] Alexander [1948-53]?

MN: Yeah, Grove Farm. Well, we don't know him. We know from Moragne.

During my time when I was there, it was Moragne all the way through. Then after the plantation store closed, Moragne was still there but I think he was there for few years.

WN: When did the store close?

MN: Around 1959, yeah? Then Moragne was retired. Then [Lyle M.] Van Dreser took over [1969-74], who was the assistant manager at Kōloa. And that's why, I say, managers has lots to do in any company. That man has to be a smart man. Same fields, same people, same mill. Everything is the same, [but] Moragne, he made money every year. And yet, Van Dreser, when he took over, he lost money. The production was way down. As I say, the same people working, same supervisors, everything was the same. That's why, the manager has lots to do. Like any company.

WN: What about changes in the store management? After Mr. Maxey . . .

MN: After Mr. Maxey, they hired a guy from the Mainland, Senger.

WN: S-A-N-G-E-R?

MN: S-E-N-G-E-R, this [Charles] Senger. But he was here for only one year. Then, they got Mr. Cox. He stayed until the store was closed.

WN: What was his first name?

MN: Howard. He died, too. Too bad. Nice man, he was. That's when he promoted me to assistant manager. When he came over, you know, Howard Cox.

WN: About when was that?

MN: Chee, how long was he there? I think he was there about five or ten years, though.

WN: So after Grove Farm took over?

MN: No, still Grove Farm.

WN: I mean, well, after Grove Farm merged with Kōloa [in 1948]?

MN: Oh, yeah. That's right. Way afterward.

WN: So, in '59, why did the store have to close?

MN: Because in 1946, they had a strike. And the store was plantation store, so we had to give raise as the union demand. Not that we didn't make money, but they didn't make enough. Their percentage rate came way down in the profits. So, they felt, well, rather invest in something else, they closed it. Not only us, you know. McBryde Store closed. All the plantation stores closed. Except

Līhu'e was there for quite some time. But they finally closed, too. So there's no plantation store today. No more. That's after the union came. Because the [non-plantation] competitors, no union [i.e., did not have to pay union wages].

WN: So, you're saying that that was the main reason?

MN: That's the main reason.

WN: What about the decrease in sugar?

MN: No, that has nothing to do. Because, as I said, the sugar was good when Moragne was there. Every year, he produced. More every year. They just increased. It's not because they lost money, I think. I'm not sure, but I heard that [the store] don't make enough. It's quite a sum, that big store like that. The inventory and whatnot, they have to prepare. They felt that they better invest in something where they would make more money, I think. That's what I heard.

WN: What about after the union, people had more cash, huh? Instead of depending more on the plantation for their goods. Did that have something to do with it? With the eventual closing of the store?

MN: You mean, they had more cash, that's why they buy elsewhere?

WN: People could go to other stores?

MN: No, that had nothing to do. Because prior to the strike, they were getting dollar a day. Ten hours work and six days a week. Then the strike. When the strike happened and they won the strike, it was raised. But those days, the houses were all free, though. Water free, everything free. Then, after the strike, it was raised to twenty-five cents an hour, eight hours a day. So in other words, two dollars [a day]. From one dollar, it went up to two dollars. But during the week, where before was six dollars a week, it went up to ten dollars a week because five days work only. So they get two days off, and yet they made four dollars more. That was big raise for them. But they [i.e., the plantation] started to charge house rent. Few dollars. Five, ten dollars maybe. Then they started to charge one dollar for water. And those were the increases, yeah? But still, you know, they were way ahead.

WN: Were the residents able to buy their homes eventually?

MN: Not at that time. In those days, the plantation won't sell the homes. They just charge rental after the increase in their pay and less days' work.

WN: But when this Grove Farm subdivision was built . . .

MN: Over here?

WN: Where the camps [were].

MN: Yeah, yeah. That's way . . .

WN: Did the camp residents have a first crack at buying?

MN: Yeah. They had the first choice. They were given the first preference. Then, whatever they can't sell, then anybody can buy. But the plantation people all bought, bought, bought, bought. That's why, the majority of those homes over there are [owned by present and former] plantation people. But they gave them for a reasonable price, too, because plantation people. I was up in the camp there, too. And my section there was the first place they put out on sale. I was [asked] if I would buy or not. But at that time, I had this property here.

WN: Oh, when did you get this property?

MN: This property was way before that. Way before the store closed. In fact, I'm living here about thirty-five years already.

WN: So, 1952, around?

MN: Fifty-two to eighty. . . . More than that. I mean, the property. Oh, more than that. About forty-five years already, I had this. So, I think I had it ten years before I built the house. Just paying taxes. (Chuckles) This was Waterhouse property.

WN: Oh, you bought from [Dr. A. H.] Waterhouse?

MN: Yeah, all this here, Waterhouse property. All in the back here where Ike [Okamura] living, all around this, Waterhouse property. Running all up to the service station there. And all the Yamamoto Store [area] and all that. All that, Waterhouse property.

WN: Up to Weliweli Road?

MN: Yeah, yeah. Up to there. That's all Waterhouse property except Sueoka Store owns their own. But in the back part of the Sueoka Store and all the stores there, individuals own that. Only the front part belongs to Waterhouse. You know, Waterhouse probably would never have sold this place. But he had a hard time. He was a man too good, you know. Those days, plantation, he had a regular pay. But [for] all the outsiders [i.e., non-plantation people], he was the only doctor. So, all the outsiders, especially Hawaiians like that, naturally, the doctor going take care. They won't pay. No money to pay. So, he just let it go. I think that was the cause. I don't know. Maybe he had some other [financial] trouble, I don't know. He was a nice man. Nice man.

In fact, when we bought this place, the back part over here, all [was] for sale. At the beginning, this section was for sale. Then after that, the back part, the whole thing was for sale. Then he

started to sell up here. When you think back, chee, if you had bought that property. (Chuckles) Boy, the money. Not only here. Even that, where David Isoda lives, around there.

WN: Po'ipū?

MN: That's not Po'ipū. Well, they may call it Po'ipū. Before Kukui'ula anyway. That used to be all Waterhouse, you know. And where David Isoda lives, five cents a square [foot]. And the beach side was seven cents a square.

WN: What about over here?

MN: Over here was seven cents a square. But people those days had no interest in buying property. What you going to do with it? You have your own plantation home. And you figure that you can live there as long as you live. You buy a property and just leave it idle, paying taxes, for what?

WN: Yeah. But what made you buy?

MN: I was forced to buy. Because my wife used to work for Waterhouse. She was a maid over there. And due to that, he came over to my house, oh, practically every night, insisting. You know, "Buy this, buy this. Because it's going to be good for you. And if you borrow the money and if you can't pay the interest, I'll even pay the interest for you. So, buy, buy." We were actually forced to buy because she was working there and she felt, you know, she had little obligation, so she bought. By golly, he was right. He was right. I believe in him. If wasn't that, I probably would have bought that plantation place over there [i.e., Grove Farm subdivision]. Of course, we had to build a new house, but there's new homes around there now.

WN: How much was it going for up there?

MN: Around there, was ten cents only at that time.

WN: Oh. So, over here was more cheap, then?

MN: Well, this was way before that place [went on sale]. And this section here, this front parcel was for sale first, you know, this Muraoka over here, and [Yoshiichi] Miyahara, and myself. Up to the road there. And they divided this into five lots. Miyahara's wife's sister was the cook and old-time worker for Waterhouse. And due to that, Waterhouse knows them best. So he went there first, to Miyahara. Miyahara was kind of forced, too, probably. But Miyahara, being not on the plantation, he had his own place. I don't know whether at that time he owned that or not. He was living down the lower section, not the plantation camp. The way he told me, he said, "Okay, Doctor, I'll buy. But give me the first choice."

"Okay. You're the first one I came to see, anyway."

So he told him he wanted, instead of this corner, he wanted this section here because there's a road going that way.

WN: Malino Road?

MN: Yeah. So he wanted it. But, "You have five lots over there. Two lots is too big for me. One lot is not enough. How about giving me one and a half?"

So, the doctor says, he wanted to sell, so, "Okay. I'll give you one and a half." So he divided these three lots, my property and there, in one-and-a-half lots each. So, I was forced to buy the one-and-a-half lot. Because the next person he went to see was Yamasaki. And that Yamasaki bought two lots over there. Instead of one lot, he bought two lots. So, one-and-a-half lots over here was left. That's when he came to see me. No choice. I had to buy this place.

WN: Oh, good thing, you got the lot and a half.

MN: Yeah. (Chuckles) Good thing, I did. But now, I regret because I can't keep up as I get older. (Chuckles) When I was young yet, I liked it. I really improved [the lot]. Then, somehow, I don't know how I did it, but I built this house, boy. And I didn't think about [building] this kind of house. I was thinking [more] like the plantation houses. I didn't know any better, eh? (Chuckles) I figured, the plantation homes up there, cottages, eh? You know, the roof goes like this. Kinda square like. I admired those, those days. So, I was thinking, "Chee, I'd like to have one like that." I told the contractor, and the contractor says, "No. Let's have an architect check up on it and see whether you like it or not." The architect says, "You build something like this. Cost little bit more, but you're going to enjoy it." So, I just left it up to them. By golly, look, still today, nice home. It looks rather modern, eh?

WN: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

MN: Different from my neighbors over here. That's more like the cottage, yeah?

WN: Oh, Miyahara?

MN: Miyahara, yeah.

WN: Big house.

MN: Big, four bedrooms, that.

WN: So, when the store closed, how did you feel about the store closing?

MN: Oh, boy. I had three kids in college, yet. By golly, nights, I

couldn't sleep. How I going to support them? How I going make my living? At that time when the store closed, I didn't have this house yet to pay or anything like that. But my worry was, how I'm going to support the kids through school? Because my intention was, no matter what sacrifice I make, I'm going to send the kids to school, if they go. You can't expect every one to go probably, but mine did. That's why I worried. Because at that time, at the store, I was making about \$400 [a month], I think. Easy living, you know. But when they told me, "You'll get a job if you go to Lihu'e Plantation (Store) as an appliance and furniture salesman." Okay, well and good, I'll do it. Because I know [about being a] salesman. But they said, "We'll give you \$200 minimum and the rest on commission, whatever you sell." Well, if I can't sell more than certain amount, then only \$200. How in the world I going get along with \$200? Oh, it's half of what I'm getting, eh? So, nevertheless, I tried and apply.

I [first] went to Moragne, you know. I told him if I could get that luna job on the plantation, because I said, "I've been working for Grove Farm for quite a long time already."

Then he says, "Gee, I'm sorry. There's no opening now." Well, no doubt there wasn't an opening, but he could make an opening if he wanted to, no doubt about that.

Then I told him, "You know, Mr. Moragne, I worked for the store for twenty-nine years. And I was in the supervisory position and I practically ran the store for many, many years. I did everything." I told him, you know. "And yet, you never had approached me to see whether I would want to take the managership or not. Not one time." He put his head down, boy. There was, you know, lot of prejudice those days, yet. Because as I have told you, I did everything.

Then I went to apply to this hospital over here, whether there's an opening over there. No more. And then, I was thinking of the county, but at that time, I was fifty-three years old already [in 1959]. That's rather old. I wouldn't know whether they would hire me or not. So, I didn't apply. So, anyway, I decided, I have to do it. So I took the job [at Lihu'e Store]. But I made it, though. I made better.

WN: Commission?

MN: Yeah. But the sad thing was, when I went there, I found out that it was all commission. The \$200 is if I don't sell a certain amount, then they'll give you the \$200. Say, if I sell only \$1,000 and after figuring the commission, I make less than \$200, then they give me the \$200. Not \$200 minimum, and over and above that is commission. That's what I found out. I was disappointed. I went over there and I argued with the boss. Nothing you can do. That's the custom, they said. So, I took it.

WN: But you still made more?

MN: Oh, too good. Somehow, when you have the desire to do it, you'll make it.

WN: You sold appliances?

MN: Appliances and furniture.

WN: Līhu'e Store?

MN: Yeah, Līhu'e Store, selling appliances and furniture. But only [for] eight years. Eight years, they closed. And I was only sixty-one years old.

WN: So, 1968, then . . .

MN: And so, I had to take the pension, because I was sixty-one years old. No sense trying to get the severance pay or anything like that. So, I took the pension. The pension was way down. And even today, I get low pension money. But the social security, I continued. Because when the [Līhu'e] Store closed, it was just temporary because Ramsay took over right away. So, then, I was hired by Ramsay [Appliance]. Three to four years. And over there, I made better. Bigger, eh? And then, they advertising and what, very tremendous. People come. So I made better. When the Līhu'e Store closed, I had in mind all the time, at sixty-two I want to retire because I've been working too long. I wanted to retire. But I still had one kid in college yet. So, I figure, well, I'll go until sixty-five until she graduates. And that's how I quit. But again, lucky I worked till sixty-five, because look how long I lived. (Chuckles)

WN: So you retired in 1971?

MN: Seventy-one, was it?

WN: Seventy-one, and you were born 1906.

MN: Yeah, right.

WN: Nineteen six, then '71.

MN: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

WN: So, you know, now that you're retired and everything, how do you feel about your life and what you've done?

MN: Wonderful. A retired life is most wonderful for me. Why? I'm my own boss. I do what I like. Nobody going tell me what. I eat what I like. I do everything on my own. When you work for somebody, there's always somebody, boss, over you. Everything is, "Yes, sir. Yes, sir." You cannot argue with him because he gets mad. But when you retired, you go where you like, you do what you like. Nobody going tell you what to do. Most wonderful life. That's why, as

early as you can, retire as soon as you can and enjoy life, if you can make a decent living thereafter. But golly, when you're up to the retiring age, do you expect to make a million dollars? Enjoy it.

And the money, likewise. I feel that way. Make use of the money. Don't pile it up and just leave it there until you die. Or until you get lame or until you get crippled. Enjoy. Enjoy it every year. Of course, don't just spend it foolishly. You have to leave enough to make a decent living. Although, today, due to the social security and whatnot, people all have a decent living. There are poor people like us before, we feel that we get too much money and we don't know how to spend it. But not me, I spend 'em. You know, it's no boasting, every year I go to the Mainland to see my children. Three months I stay there. From the East Coast to the West Coast up to the Northwest.

WN: Oh, yeah? Oh, terrific.

MN: And I've gone practically all around the world already. Not all, but the Orient, like I went ten countries already. Okinawa, Hong Kong, Philippines, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia, Thailand, and then Borneo. Ten countries, I went. Wonderful. You have to see the world in order to realize how good America is. How your life over here is. People living over there, they haven't been around. That's all they know, so they feel the world is as such, that everybody is living a poor life. But even those people, now, if they come out and come to America, then they see, oh, boy, what a life America get. That's how you know the world. We went to Europe, likewise. Europe is a poor country, especially Italy. The water is not drinkable. You have to buy your water to drink and all that. When we did go to the Orient, some places, like Borneo and whatnot, we weren't allowed to drink.

You know, when I went to Borneo, that country was fifty years behind our life here. You know, when I was a kid when we were in the plantation, my father used to cook. And what we had was two stones on both sides with two pipes over here, and we used to cook under there with firewood, rice and what. That's what Borneo was doing when we went over there. Water, they get this big bamboo like this, and then they cut certain section, and then they make it big like this. And that used to be the bucket for them. They have to go down the ditch and get the water with that. What a life. And you know their house? They had what they called the "long house." All made of bamboo. That long house, it's about twelve feet high. You know, the legs are twelve feet high. The danger was, they were afraid of the cut necks and whatnot, those days.

WN: The what?

MN: Those guys that used to cut their neck [i.e., headhunters]. I don't know, it's not robber or anything like that. You know, in Borneo, they said, for instance, a young boy loves a young girl and they

want to get married. But the young girl will tell the boy, "Okay, show me your bravery." And so, he has to go around and try and get somebody's neck. And then he brings [the head] over to the girl, show that he is brave. That's the story they tell us. Way backwards, yeah.

WN: What about Kōloa? What are your feelings toward Kōloa?

MN: Kōloa is an old, old town. And I've lived practically all my life here. You see, the old Kōloa used to be a real town. Everybody used to pass Kōloa. It's not the shortcut they have to take today. See, from Knudsen Gap, you go straight to Kalāheo now. Before, by Knudsen Gap, no more that road. They had to come down to Kōloa, and go to Lāwa'i, pass Lāwa'i, and go to Kalāheo.

WN: I see. Oh, so that main [belt highway a.k.a. Kaumuali'i Highway] didn't continue from Knudsen Gap?

MN: No. That's why, they all used to come Kōloa. Kōloa was prosperous, those days. It was quite a big town. Then, when they made the road there [i.e., extended Kaumuali'i Highway to Kalāheo], Kōloa became a dead town. It just dealt with the Kōloa people. People don't come here. Nothing to come because no change, eh? Then, well, just recently now, the hotels came up. That's when Kōloa again came up. All the tourists come. And this guy that started that Old Kōloa Town?

WN: Bob Gerell?

MN: Oh, boy, he's too good. Look what he did today. They making money. And not only making money. He's making this place really progressive. Which means, bad for us. We don't like it. We like the old way. Traffic's too heavy, dangerous. We don't like it. And all those stores over there, nice, sure. The tourists go. What we have to go and buy there? Nothing. We don't buy anything at all because nothing interesting to us. We'd rather go to the shopping center and shop. So, for us, it's no good. We'd rather have the old way, the old style, relaxing and whatnot. That's a change. (Chuckles) But Kōloa has been an old town, though, really. Kōloa School, the same old place for how many years already.

WN: What do you think the future of Kōloa is?

MN: Well, Kōloa will continue as is, no doubt about it, because of the hotels unless someday the tourist business will drop just like sugar. We don't know. We don't know what will take its place or whether it continues better or not, we don't know again. That's something that's a gambling chance, eh? But if it continues as is, what we need is more wider roads, and right in Kōloa today what we need is more low-income homes and old-age homes. We don't have that. We have one low-income home just started recently over there. But not enough. The population increases because more hotels and more people coming from outside, which means more homes we need,

which means the rental is high. And the poor old retired people who have no home, it causes a difficulty. The social security and whatnot they have is insufficient. Because the rental is too high. They have a hard time. That's where the welfare comes in, anyway. (Chuckles) So, we're lucky. Our country is rich, that's why. (Chuckles) Somehow, they'll take care of you.

WN: Well, before I turn off the tape recorder, is there any last things you want to say?

MN: Well, actually, I don't know why I want to give my history to you rather than the Kōloa history. I thought you were interested in Kōloa history.

WN: Well, the idea is to get everybody's own personal histories and put it together to make . . .

MN: One.

WN: . . . a Kōloa history. So I think just by listening to your life, talking about the store, and then your work in the sugar fields, is a part of Kōloa's history.

MN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And then, those days comparing to today, the difference there is. That's a big difference. That's where, whoever will read, if it's in the library, will notice, "Chee, boy, the world has really changed." And it's continued to change, no doubt about that. I wish I can live another fifty years so I can see the change. See, from the buggy days to the cars, trucks and whatnot to the airplane today. You know, when we were kids and when we were young, we never thought we'd see America [i.e., the Mainland]. Never. No transportation. There were the steamships. How can we afford it? And say, those days, probably take about ten days or more maybe. We can't lay off [from work]. How we going to eat and go? See, that was the difficulty. But today, due to the fast transportation, we can see the world. And people have money to go and see. That's the wonderful thing.

You know, some day, if I live long enough, I think I'll be able to go to the moon, like you, too, and everybody. Did you ever expect a heavy plane like that would fly? Hard to believe, hard to believe. But it's happening. And another thing is, we went to the moon already. And so, there are ways to go to the moon, no doubt about that. Maybe someday, we'll all go to the moon. And then, if we go to the moon all the time, the price comes down just like the airplane, too. So we can afford it, you know? (Chuckles)

WN: Yeah. Well, thank you very much for your time.

MN: Yeah, yeah, okay. Nice talking to you.

END OF INTERVIEW

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